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18TH AND 19TH CENTURY CULTURE

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Summary

Using previously unknown evidence from contemporary onlookers (both famous and little-known), this essay identifies and classifies the major references to 'Revolution' in eighteenth-century Britain. At the start, the most common category of comments referred to abrupt political-regime change. The 'Happy Revolution' or what became later known as 'the Glorious Revolution' of 1688/9 was the prototype. This political terminology was revived in the 1770s, to denote, whether in praise or blame, the American colonists' revolt and, after 1789, the massive upheavals in France.

Alongside that, a much less well known strand of commentary referred to social and cultural change in terms of 'revolution' or 'the world turned upside down'. The meanings of this usage are probed to show that it encompassed some elements of change (commercial, cultural) that historians commonly label as 'evolutionary'.

Furthermore, there was a new category of comment in the later eighteenth century, which referred to economic transformation. These industrial usages borrowed much more from earlier social applications than from references to political processes, although both shared the same word. Hence there was a late eighteenth-century/ early nineteenth-century language of 'industrial revolution' or equivalent long before Toynbee in 1881 named Britain's transformation as 'THE Industrial Revolution'.

Finally, the essay explores the potential confusions between the different applications of 'revolution' in the eighteenth century. Given the diverse modes of change, from micro- to macro-, historians need a new and better vocabulary to differentiate between the rival strands. Forcing political, cultural, social, sexual and economic 'revolutions' into one universal mould obscures more than it illuminates. Let's have some Macro-Transformation alongside the inevitable Revolution.

Time for Revollusion

Revolution – *Revollusion* in this strikingly mis-spelt version from Berlin – is a word and, more importantly, a concept of great potency. It appears and reappears in many historic contexts and always offers a challenge to interpreters.[1] So it was in the eighteenth century. So it has continued thereafter. And so today it should stimulate analysts to broaden the vocabulary of dramatic change to incorporate Revolution in all its variants.

For some literary theorists and anthropologists, sometime back, the power of words in their deepest structures was summarised by the formula that 'language determines consciousness'. Most historians, coming from a deeply empirical discipline, refrain from engaging with such abstract formulations. Even those most sympathetic to the linguistic turn tend to be unwilling to grant language or the 'linguistic episteme' supremacy over everything. After all, human history existed in the many long eons before either speech or writing was developed. Hence when historians do reflect upon these theoretical debates, they tend to prefer the alternative formulation that 'consciousness determines language'.[2]

That said, once words/concepts do appear, they often contribute a potency of their own. Hence it is much more feasible, ultimately, to think in terms of a rich dialectical interchange between consciousness and language. People develop new terms to describe new circumstances and new imaginings. But then powerful words/ concepts also acquire stickingpower – even too much so. Later generations thus may have a struggle to break from old terminologies and to reinvent their language.

C Political Revolution

In the case of Revolution, the word itself was far from new in the seventeenth-century. It was used in English and numerous other European languages to refer to the regular turnings of a wheel or, in the sixteenth century, to the newly-discovered orbits of the planets around the sun.[4] A long-established model of political change in history, derived from the classical world, also proposed that systems of governments changed in a merry-go-round. They revolved from the rule of one – to the rule of the few – to the rule of the many – and back to the rule of one – and so on, *ad infinitum*. In practice, changes were often variegated. Aristotle, for example, noted that a revolution could refer either to a significant adaptation of an existing constitution or to a complete switch from one type of constitution to another.[5]

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1 P. Calvert, *Revolution* (London, 1970); idem, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution* (Milton Keynes, 1990); and I. Kramnick, 'Reflections on Revolution: Definitions and Explanations in Recent Scholarship', *History and Theory*, 11 (1972), pp. 26-63, provide good introductions.

2 Compare G. Deutscher, *Through the Language Glass: Why the World Looks Different in Other Languages* (New York, 2010); with warning against absolutising language from Alexander Spirkin, 'Consciousness and Language', in his *Dialectical Materialism* (1983), 3.3, in www.marxists.org/reference/archive/spirkin/works.

See also J.A. Lucy, *Language Diversity and Thought: A Reformulation of the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis* (Cambridge, 1992); W. Croft, *Typology and Universals* (Cambridge, 1990); S. Pinker, *The*

Yet, however multifarious, cyclical models usefully contained both change *and* ultimate continuity, putting short-term upheavals into a deeper pattern.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, the term 'Revolution' was pressed into use in England at the time of the mid-seventeenth-century civil wars. Things were manifestly changing. In 1654, Oliver Cromwell was one who referred, approvingly, to God's revolutions: 'The Lord hath done such things amongst us as have not been known in the world these thousand years'.[6] In this case, he was clearly thinking of not only of a beneficial transformation but also of an unrepeatable moment in world history. Others, like the little-known pamphleteer William Beech, were less cheery. He deplored England's 'present distempers' as produced by

Language Instinct: The New Science of Language and Mind (New York, 1994); and, for historians' debates, E.A. Clark, *History, Theory Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004).

4 Famously by Nicolaus Copernicus, *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium: On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres* (1543).

5 Aristotle, *The Politics* , transl. J.A. Sinclair (Harmondsworth, 1962), p. 190: Bk V, ch.1.

6 Cromwell's speech at dissolution of his first Parliament, 27 Jan. 1654, in C. Hill, *God's Englishman: Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* (London, 1970), p. 251. For other mid-seventeenth-century usages, see also C. Hill, 'The Word "Revolution" in Seventeenth-Century England', in R. Ollard and P. Tudor-Craig (eds), *For Veronica Wedgwood, These: Studies in Seventeenth-Century History* (London, 1986), pp. 143-51.

'the late revolution of government in this nation' (1651).[3] Beech's meaning was Aristotelian rather than eschatological – referring to the constitutional change from executed monarchy to the new republican Commonwealth under the Rump Government (1649-53). Such usages, however, remained comparatively rare. The celebrated – and contested – designations of the mid-seventeenth-century upheavals as the 'Puritan Revolution' (S.R. Gardiner)[4] or the 'English Revolution' (T.H. Green; Christopher Hill)[5] were the handiwork of much later historians.

It was instead the constitutional upheavals of 1688/9 which brought the term into wider currency and a new meaning. The challenge to James II by his son-in-law (and nephew)

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3 W. Beech, *A View of England's Present Distempers, Occasioned by the Late Revolution of Government in this Nation …* (London, 1650).

4 S.R. Gardiner, *The First Two Stuarts and the Puritan Revolution, 1603-60* (London, 1908).

5 T.H. Green, *Four Lectures on the English Revolution* (London, 1912); later revived by C. Hill (ed.), *The English Revolution, 1640: Three Essays* (London, 1940). Hill also identified the English Revolution as a classic 'bourgeois' revolution: see C. Hill and E. Dell (eds), *The Good Old Cause: The English Revolution of 1640-60 – Its Causes, Course and Consequences* (London, 1949); in second edn, with introduction by C. Hill (London, 1969), pp. 20-4, 470-6; and C. Hill, *Reformation to Industrial Revolution, 1530-1780: Economic History of Britain, Vol. 2* (1969; repr. 1980), pp. 213-74.

William of Orange led to the overthrow of an anointed king. The country's governance did not collapse. But James II, realising that he could not halt the intruder, fled to France. In his place, a specially constituted Convention Parliament not only established the joint monarchy of William III and his wife Mary II but significantly amended the framework of government. The 1689 *Bill of Rights* (note the assertive title) enacted a number of constitutional principles, although it did not introduce a fully written constitution.[6] And the 1689 Act of Toleration for the first time established, by law, freedom of worship for all Trinitarian Protestants, including the Protestant Dissenters who stood outside the established Church of England.[7]

By any token, these were dramatic changes. Within months, writers were saluting the 'Great Revolution'.[8] The bloodless nature of William's progression across England was particularly welcomed, in contrast to the divisive civil wars of the 1640s.[9] Other positive names followed: the 'Wonderful Revolution', the 'Happy Revolution'.[10] And the version that stuck was euphoric. The 'Glorious Revolution' was a distinctly Whig nomenclature, reflecting the views of the moderate constitutionalists among the ruling gentry, merchants and professionals. Over time, this positive name became a standard usage, especially after the final Jacobite defeat in 1745.[11] The terminology celebrated the connotations of Protestantism, nationalism, constitutionalism, and non-violence. Furthermore, a significant element of the perceived 'glory' of 1688/9 was the absence not only of civil war but also of social upheaval from below.

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6 The language of 'Rights' harked back to the 1628 *Petition of Right*, claiming intrinsic rights for the people, rather than grants by royal favour. The provisions of the 1689 Bill of Rights also drew ideas from the 1654 Instrument of Government, drawn up at the start of Oliver Cromwell's Protectorate: J.R. Tanner, *English Constitutional Conflicts of the Seventeenth Century, 1603-89* (Cambridge, 1962).

7 Further Acts of (limited) Toleration were passed for Scotland (1712) and Ireland (1719).

8 See J. Welwood, *Vindication of the Present Great Revolution in England* (London, 1689); and T. Beverley, *The Late Great Revolution in this Nation … to be Duly Ascribed to the Supreme Spirit, now about to Move in the Fulfilling All Prophecy …* (London, 1689).

9 Outside England, there certainly was fighting, which was bloody but not long protracted: the supporters of the departed James (Latin *Jacobus*), who were quickly named as Jacobites, were defeated by the Williamites in Scotland at the Battle of Dunkeld (Aug. 1689) and in Ireland at the Battle of the Boyne (July 1690).

10 See R.B. [R. Burton, pseudonym of N. Crouch], *The History of the House of Orange … A Brief Relation [of events] … till the Late Wonderful Revolution* (London, 1693); and R. Steele, *The Crisis: Or, a Discourse Representing the Just Causes of the Late Happy Revolution … With Some Seasonable Remarks on the Dangers of a Popish Successor* (London, 1713).

11 See variously J. Gale, *A Thanksgiving Sermon … in Commemoration of the Deliverance of this Nation from the Gunpowder Plot; And of the Late Glorious Revolution in 1688* (London, 1713); and E. Pickard, *National Praise to God for the Glorious Revolution, the Protestant Succession, and the Signal Successes and Blessings with which Providence has Crowned Us: A Sermon* (London, 1761).

Nonetheless, it is important to note that the English populace was not so much passive at William's arrival but broadly acquiescent. James II had made himself unpopular by a series of high-handed actions. After William's landing in south-west England, the citizens of Exeter were the first who had to decide. It would have been difficult for the Dutch invader to proceed, if a major regional capital had held out against him. Indeed, when William's army first arrived outside the stout city walls, Exeter's gates were obdurately closed.[12] But a messenger went inside to parley. James's supporters lost heart and some fled. Next day the West Gate was opened and William entered with civic pomp, attended by his army, many local gentlemen, and his exotic guards of 200 armed Swiss mercenaries, 200 Laplanders wearing bear-skins, and 200 Surinamese from the Dutch Republic's south American colony. After that signal success, his march to London became an increasingly triumphal procession. William accordingly won with a public parade not a back-stairs *coup d'état*. The rebellious English people would have been quite capable of resisting him – but did not.

William became, in his own restrained style, an iconic saviour. For Northern Ireland Protestants, he became a special favourite, familiarly known as 'King Billy'. A celebrated painting depicted his landing at Torbay. In regal style, the would-be monarch sits easily astride a prancing white horse, his sword at the ready, and his ships just off-shore: a determined leader for the people, like a shining knight of old.[13]

To be sure, objections can easily be made to the standard name for 1688/9. Generations of students have written essays debating the proposition that 'The Glorious

Revolution was neither glorious nor a revolution'. Historians still remain divided on the issue. Some downplay the novelty of these events, while others stress their radical nature.[14] Yet, since the politico-religious settlement was redrawn, there was certainly a 'revolution' in Aristotle's broadest sense of a significant constitutional restructuring.

When, much later, the political philosopher Edmund Burke asserted polemically that 1688/9 entailed nothing more than 'a small and a temporary deviation from the strict order of a regular hereditary succession',[15] he was wrong. The Bill of Rights included the phrase *'the throne being thereby vacant',* following James II's flight, which was taken to constitute his abdication. That declaration in itself represented more than a minor deviation. It flatly contradicted the first principle of hereditary monarchy. Theoretically, the throne is never vacant: 'the king is dead, long live the king'. This time, however, it was declared legally to

12 An inconspicuous plaque today records the site of the West Gate (demolished in 1815) and the city's momentous decision in November 1688, which averted a potential civil war in England.

13 National Maritime Museum: Jan Wyck (1652-1702), *William III Landing at Brixham, Torbay, Nov. 1688* (1688).

14 Among a huge literature, contrast W.A. Speck, *Reluctant Revolutionaries: Englishmen and the Revolution of 1688* (Oxford, 1988), 211-51; and S.C.A. Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven, 2009).

15 E. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London, 1790), ed. C.C. O'Brien (Harmondsworth, 1979), p. 101.

be so – as had occurred *de facto* between 1649 and the restoration of Charles II in 1660. Monarchy again survived in 1688/9 but by parliamentary say-so, not through a process of hereditary claims.[16]

Following this crisis, 'Revolution' quickly became the accepted term of art for the overthrow of a tyrannical ruler, following by a new constitutional regime, guaranteeing specific rights for the people. William III as Prince of Orange had declared his cause to be 'for the preserving of the Protestant Religion, and for the restoring of the Laws and Liberties of England, Scotland, Ireland, etc'.[17] The idea of restraining absolute monarchy had potentially European-wide appeal. One English observer in 1690 had a startling claim to prescience when he foretold the coming of similar revolution in France.[18] In fact, this forecast proved to be just under 100 years premature. It showed, however, how infectious hopes were raised among English critics of absolute monarchy, especially the French variety.

Given this legacy, it was not surprising that the revolt of the North American colonists in the 1770s generated talk of further 'revolution'. They were fighting a war of independence, not only to oust a monarch who seemed to them a tyrant but also to establish a new republic. That was constitution-changing in a big way. Interestingly, some colonists had proposed finding a new king to replace George III. Perhaps the exiled 'Bonnie' Prince Charlie, the Jacobite Young Pretender, might cross the Atlantic to reclaim at least some of his long-lost patrimony?[19] Drawing upon their Whig constitutional inheritance, however, the American rebels were ready to manage without a king, even while their elected Presidents were given extensive proto-monarchical prerogatives.

Evidently, something dramatic was afoot – and something more far-reaching than a rerun of the ousting of James II in 1688/9. The 'American Revolution' was saluted in Philadelphia in 1779;[20] in France in 1781 by l'Abbé Reynal;[21] and in Britain in 1784 by the

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16 Thus when Mary II died in 1694, William III remained unchallenged as king, although superior hereditary claims were held not only by the exiled James II, plus James's Catholic son the Old Pretender, but also by William's sister-in-law Anne, who succeeded him as Queen (1702-14) only after his death. After that, the crown was allotted by the 1701 Act of Settlement to the Hanoverian Elector George I, who was impeccably Protestant and a descendant of the Stuarts, but far from the most senior in terms of strict hereditary right.

17 From the declaration, read aloud in Exeter Cathedral by its author the Whig Bishop Gilbert Burnet, see J. Whittle, 'An Exact Diary of the Late Expedition of his Illustrious Highness, the Prince of Orange' (1688): www.dsnell.zynet.co.uk/Guides/Word/William_III_in_Exeter.doc.

18 E. Petrie, *The Fate of France: A Discourse, wherein … it is Showed that by the Happy Revolution in England, all the Designs of the French King for Universal Monarchy are Disappointed; and the Rational Grounds to believe his Downfall Near* (London, 1690).

19 M.G.H. Pittock, *The Invention of Scotland: The Stuart Myth and the Scottish Identity, 1638 to the Present* (1991), p. 194.

20 Anon. [Gouverneur Morris], *Observations on the American Revolution* (Philadelphia, 1779).

21 G.T.F. Reynal [l'Abbé Reynal], *Révolution de l'Amérique* (Paris and London, 1781).

Nonconformist minister Richard Price (his tract also being translated into French).[22] Insofar as there was a single iconic hero of the American upheavals, he was George Washington. The first commander-in-chief and then first President was also portrayed on his white horse, symbolising purity. His dress is always shown as soldierly, never lavish; and, when he holds out a sword, it is extended not vengefully but with firm intent.[23]

Again, however, there is scope for debate about the extent to which the American 'revolution' was truly revolutionary. It remains a set topic for students to discuss. Historians too continue to disagree.[24] All accept, however, that the disfiguring affront to liberty in the form of legally-accepted slavery in the southern colonies/states was not ended or even ameliorated by the events of 1776/83. In that regard, it could be argued that the American Civil War (1861-5) was a much delayed component of a protracted multi-staged struggle for freedom, which began in 1776 and did not really end even with the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863.[25] Moreover, it should be acknowledged the oppression of the indigenous Americans was not halted by Independence.[26] And the new 'democratic' Republic excluded all women from voting, as was customary at that time.[27] Thus there were clear social limits to the extent of change. On the other hand, the settlement was undeniably radical in ending monarchy, in instituting a written constitution, and in throwing off the tutelage of a distant power. Hence the revolutionary tag became the standard name for the American struggle. And so it remains.

Ultimately, however, it was the French Revolution that became the classic prototype. In its exuberance and in its terror, it overshadowed all its precursors. The events following upon the fall of the Bastille in July 1789 were immediately hailed as revolutionary, long before

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22 See R. Price, *Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution, and the Means of Making it a Benefit to the World* (London and Boston, 1784), transl. as *Observations sur l'importance de la Révolution de l'Amérique* (1784).

23 P. Hannaford (ed.), *The Essential George Washington: Two Hundred Years of Observation on the Man, the Myth, the Patriot* (Vermont, 1999); W.E. Woodward, *George Washington: The Image and the Man* (New York, 1926).

24 Contrast J.P. Greene (ed.), *The American Revolution: Its Character and Limits* (New York, 1987); and idem (ed.), *The Ambiguity of the American Revolution* (New York, 1968); with, among many others, G.B. Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (London, 2006).

25 For introductions to a massive bibliography, see S. Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and AntiSlavery* (Cambridge, 2009); G.B. Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth* (Cambridge, Mass., 2006); and J.P. Kaminski (ed.), *A Necessary Evil? Slavery and the Debate over the Constitution* (Madison, 1995).

26 See variously K.W. Townsend and M. Nicholas, *First Americans: A History of Native Peoples* (Boston, 2013); and F.E. Hoxie and others (eds), *Native Americans and the Early Republic* (Charlottesville, 1999).

27 See K. Taschek, *Daughters of Liberty: The American Revolution and the Early Republic, 1775-1827* (New York, 2011).

the French king was executed in January 1793.[28] Moreover, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* in August 1789, while picking up the terminology of the English Bill of Rights, went much further in its democratic and universalist implications.[29] There was much popular involvement and conflict, both for and (in some regions) against the unfolding changes. As is well known, things became extraordinarily complex. France's first Republic (1792-1804) was then up-ended by an upstart Emperor (1804-1814/15), who was followed by an eventual (though not permanent) restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in 1815.

During this saga, there was at one stage a chivalrous man on a white horse. He was General Lafayette, the French nobleman who had fought with the rebels in the American War of Independence and who in 1789-91 tried to broker a constitutionalist settlement in France. Perhaps he might have become the French equivalent of George Washington, as a new president?[30] Yet no single person could embody all the complexities of the convulsions in France. Not Lafayette, who was ousted by the Jacobins; not Robespierre, who grossly overdid the Terror and was felled by his own guillotine; and not Napoleon (also depicted on a white horse) who after all turned the First Republic into Empire.

Instead, the most emblematic figure became the imagined Marianne, who was an anonymous woman of the downtrodden people. Symbolically, she was simultaneously a nurturing mother, a passionate fighter for Republican liberty, and a secularised madonna.[31] Her image memorialised the mass participation that made the French Revolution so much the paradigmatic political revolution, notwithstanding the fact that full female voting rights were not actually granted in France until 1944.

Of course, there always remains scope for debate as to how revolutionary was this great popular upheaval, both at the time and in the long term.[32] And the same applies to other similar events. To take another example, Isaac Deutscher in 1967 gave an elegantly

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28 For positive reactions, see W. Roscoe, *The French Revolution: A Song* (London, 1789?); and A. Geddes, *A Secular Ode on the French Revolution, Translated from the Original Latin* (London and Paris, 1790). For a sharply critical response, by contrast, see Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, cited above n.19.

29 J.I. Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution and Human Rights, 1750-90* (Oxford, 2011).

30 For G. du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, see B. Tuckerman, *Life of General Lafayette: With a Critical Estimate of his Character and Public Acts* (New York, 1889); and H.G. Unger, *Lafayette* (Hoboken, NJ., 2002). An equestrian statue of Lafayette, with his sword aloft, can be viewed in Paris, on Cours la Reine, VIIIe arondissement, while many more monuments abound in the USA.

31 M. Agulhon, *Marianne into Battle: Republican Imagery and Symbolism in France, 1789-1880*, transl. J. Lloyd (Cambridge, 1981).

32 Contrast studies such as F. Fehér (ed.), *The French Revolution and the Birth of Modernity* (Berkeley, 1990); with revisionists who downplay its radicalism, such as F. Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution, 17701814* , transl. A. Nevill (Oxford, 1996); and O. Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution* (Toronto, 1992). The ever-widening debates are well represented in S. Desan, L. Hunt and W.M. Nelson (eds), *The French Revolution in Global History* (Ithaca, 2013).

revisionist account of the Communist Revolution of 1917. He saw the outcome of its radicalism as being new-communist whilst still remaining deeply old-Russian.[33] Since the central government remained as or even more autocratic under Soviet rule as it had been under the Tsars, Deutscher's perception was a just one. Nonetheless, the Communist movement detected a classic sequence of popular topplings of tyrants at times of economic crisis: the English, the French, the Russian, the Chinese, and the Cuban Revolutions.

But that endorsement has by no means monopolised the terminology. So post-1989 the popular uprisings against the Marx-inspired communist regimes have also been dubbed 'revolutions' rather than, from a Marxist viewpoint, as 'counter-revolutions'. These democratic movements, being broadly non-violent, are given gentle names. They range from the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia (1989)[34] to the Rose Revolution in Georgia (2003),[39] Orange Revolution in the Ukraine (2004),[35] and so forth.[36] But, again, their radicalism remains open to debate (and remains to be seen). Moreover, in the long run, the often-masked power of continuity gives its own collateral verdict.[37]

Today, the term risks becoming applied too widely. References to a 'Twitter Revolution' and/or a 'Facebook Revolution', electronically generated by the social media, often contain a significant element of hype.[38] Nonetheless, the concept has evolved a clear meaning in political context. It refers to the mass overthrowing of an autocracy (whether violently or otherwise) which leads to constitutional regime change, in the name of the people, usually with a democratic or popular franchise (albeit sometimes excluding particular groups).

Hence 'revolution' is the accepted name for many historic and current political upheavals. Indeed, however much the revolutionary nature of particular conflagrations, old and new, remains disputed by students and historians, the name is unlikely to be dislodged.

CI Industrial Revolution

Sympathetic borrowing then spread the remit of this powerful word. By the nineteenth century, onlookers were increasingly impressed by the massive technological

33 I. Deutscher, *The Unfinished Revolution: Russia, 1917-67* (Oxford, 1967).

34 J.F.N. Bradley, *Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution: A Political Analysis* (New York, 1992). 39 G.C. Monson, *Georgia after the Rose Revolution* (New York, 2009).

35 A. Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution* (New Haven, Conn., 2005).

36 These upheavals are often known collectively as 'colour' revolutions, even though far from all the names *are* actually those of colours: see e.g. L.A. Mitchell, *The Colour Revolutions* (Philadelphia, 2013).

37 P.J. Corfield, *Time and the Shape of History* (London, 2007), pp. 26-48; and idem, 'Why is the Formidable Power of Continuity so often Overlooked?' (Nov. 2010), Blog/1 on website: www.penelopejcorfield.co.uk.

38 Among numerous commentaries, see J.H. Parmalee and S.L. Bichard, *Politics and the Twitter Revolution: How Tweets influence the Relationship between Political Leaders and the Public* (Lanham, Md, 2012); and D. Wolman, 'The Facebook Revolution', *Wired*, 16 (2008), pp. 212-17.

transformations of the economies of first Britain, then France, the USA, Germany and an increasing number of countries around the world. Political language provided an obvious resource. Three summary 'revolutionary' usages came: in French from the economist Jérôme-Adolphe Blanqui – *'la revolution industrielle'* (1837);[39] in German from the manufacturer and communist theorist Friedrich Engels – *'eine industrielle Revolution'* (1844);[40] and in English from the historian and social reformer Arnold Toynbee – '*the* Industrial Revolution' (1881; in print 1884).[41] This evocative name then gained general currency and remains in popular usage today.

Not surprisingly, given the difficulties of distilling complex changes into simple phrases, this identification has been much challenged too. Was there 'an' industrial revolution or instead a long process of 'industrialisation'? Hence did economic transformation really stem from one dramatic upheaval or is it better understood as cumulative and evolutionary? If there were big changes, did these processes entail an immediately malign 'immiseration' of the working class? Or produce a beneficial long-term improvement in living standards?[42][43] Or a widening gulf between rich and poor, no matter whether absolute poverty was alleviated or not? Given such uncertainties, was the early impact of technological innovation as widespread or drastic as used to be thought?

Indeed, had any really significant changes occurred before 1800? After all, the classic name for *the* Industrial Revolution did not appear in general currency before the 1880s, fully 100 years after the 1780s, which (by some accounts) is termed the decade of developmental

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39 J-A. Blanqui, *Histoire de l'économie politique en Europe depuis les anciens jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris, 1837): it is worth noting that Blanqui had two close family members who were activists during the Revolution, his father being a moderate Girondin reformer and his younger brother, a revolutionary firebrand.

40 F. Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1845* (Leipzig, 1845; in Engl. transl., London, 1887).

41 A. Toynbee, *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution of the Eighteenth Century in England* (London, 1884).

42 For still-continuing debates, see A.J. Taylor (ed.), *The Standard of Living in Britain in the Industrial*

Revolution (London, 1975); J.G. Williamson, *Did British Capitalism Breed Inequality?* (Boston, Mass.,

43); C.H. Feinstein, 'Pessimism Perpetuated: Real Wages and the Standard of Living in Britain during and after the Industrial Revolution', *Journal of Economic History*, 58 (1998), pp. 625-58; G. Clark, 'The Condition of the Working Class in England, 1209-2004', *Journal of Political Economy*, 113 (2005), pp. 1307-40; and R.C. Allen, 'Pessimism Preserved: Real Wages in the British Industrial Revolution' (Oxford University Dept. Economics Working Ppr, 2007).

'take-off'?[44] Put simply, is *the* Industrial Revolution really a 'myth'?[45]

Part of the definitional problems stem from the contrasting natures of political and economic transformations. They may both have massive effects in the long term. But, in their immediate form, they differ. Political conflagrations may have long prior causes but they tend to explode in dramatic convulsions of the body politic. The events are noticeable and preoccupying. People have to take sides – indeed, big political revolutions (as in the English, American, French, Russian and Chinese examples) all contained elements of outright civil war. Industrial transformations, by contrast, also have long lead times but may start incrementally, almost unnoticeably – and they don't usually lead to civil war, although they may promote exploitative warfare and commercial aggression overseas.

Within Marxist orthodoxy, of course, the really big upheavals were deemed to constitute both an economic transition and a political revolution in one: a bourgeois transformation from feudalism to capitalism in the case of the English[46] and French Revolutions,[47] a proletarian transformation from capitalism to communism in the case of Russia in October 1917[48] and China in 1949.[49] Yet those linkages proved hard to substantiate. Even fellow

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44 A schematic but influential account is available in W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth* (Cambridge, 1968), later sub-titled *A Non-Communist Manifesto* (2nd edn, Cambridge, 1971).

45 See M. Fores, 'The Myth of a British Industrial Revolution', *History*, 66 (1981), pp. 181-98; with a firm rebuttal from, *inter alia*, A. Musson, 'The British Industrial Revolution', *History*, 67 (1982), pp. 252-8. Revisionist interpretations, cutting England's eighteenth-century growth rates down to size, were in considerable vogue in the 1980s: see e.g. N.R. Crafts, *British Economic Growth during the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford, 1984). A later study envisages an earlier start-date and a much later completion: see J. de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behaviour and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2008).

Helpful guides to the complex historiography are available in D.C. Coleman, *Myth, History and the Industrial Revolution* (London, 1992), pp. 43-65: and P. Hudson, *The Industrial Revolution* (London, 1992).

46 Contrast Hill, *English Revolution* (cited above n.9); and critics such as C. Russell, 'The Bourgeois Revolution: A Mirage?' *History Today*, 40 (Sept. 1990). Some Marxists tried to 'save the phenomenon' by redefining England's victorious landowners as an 'agrarian bourgeoisie', in alliance with urban merchants.

47 See variously H. Heller, *The Bourgeois Revolution in France, 1789-1815* (New York, 2006); A.B.C. Cobban, *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1964); T.C.W. Blanning, *The French Revolution: Aristocrats versus Bourgeois?* (Basingstoke, 1987); and N. Davidson, *How Revolutionary were the Bourgeois Revolutions?* (Chicago, 2012).

48 E.g. V.I. Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (London, 1929); K. Kautsky, *Marxism and Bolshevism: Democracy and Dictatorship* (London, 1934); and subsequent debates.

49 In China in 1949, it was the rural peasantry that was deemed to play the role of the insurgent proletariat: see

Marxist historians notably disagreed as to when key transitions from great epoch to great epoch were supposed to have occurred.[50]

Some theorists tried to finesse the difficulties. Sub-stages are introduced, such as, in Europe, 'mercantile capitalism' as the precursor of 'industrial capitalism'. Or, in the East, the special 'Asiatic mode of production'. But the inevitable progression within Marxist history of one discrete economic epoch after another, in a globally applicable sequence, was thus sullied. Orthodox communists, including Josef Stalin, sternly disapproved.[55]

Yet the lesson of all these variants was clear. Historically significant economic transformations remain complex and their ramifications are often hard to date with precision. Changes can be slow-moving as well as immediate and dramatic; broad similarities can be detected but also many regional and sub-regional variations.

Furthermore, once notable economic crises have died down, the underlying structures may prove to have changed less than at first seemed to be the case. For example, 'capitalism' while often deemed by Marxists to be on its last legs,[51] has proved notably resilient and adaptable. It has taken different forms within different national and cultural traditions.[52] As a result, it has proved impossible to fit all these different political and economic 'revolutions' neatly together.

Nevertheless, major technological transformations do occur, on their own timetables. The outcome of the debates has broadly upheld the fact that various eighteenth-century inventions, like the application of steam power, proved ultimately of massive significance. In the long run, the combined forces of commercialisation, urbanisation and industrialisation are generating a world-historical 'macro-change'. Historians still disagree on the details and implications. Yet quietly the 'myth-argument' has vanished. Some prefer to write about

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R.A. Thaxton, *Salt of the Earth: The Political Origins of Peasant Protest and Communist Revolution in China* (Berkeley, Calif., 1997). In 1966, a dissatisfied Mao Zedong launched a further 'proletarian cultural revolution', based upon an idealisation of the peasantry: see W.L. Chong, *China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution: Master Narratives and Post-Mao Counter-Narratives* (Oxford, 2002); M. Gao, *The Battle for China's Past: Mao and the Cultural Revolution* (London, 2008); and P. Clark, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History* (Cambridge, 2008). Since 1978 this policy has been abandoned.

50 See the inconclusive essays in R. Hilton (ed.), *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism: A Symposium* (London, 1976); and T. Bottomore (ed.), *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (Oxford, 1983; 1987), pp. 483-5. [55] Corfield, *Time and the Shape of History*, pp. 174-83.

51 Left-wing analysts in the 1970s (and after) often referred to 'late capitalism', in the belief that the final meltdown was nigh: see E. Mandel, *Late Capitalism* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1973), transl. J. de Bres (London, 1978); and F. Jamieson, *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London, 1991).

52 For varieties of 'capitalism', see Corfield, *Time and Shape of History*, pp. 179-82; F.L. Pryor, *Capitalism Reassessed* (New York, 2010).

Britain's economic development without referring to '*the* Industrial Revolution', since many changes were evolutionary.[53] But in every case references to a long-term process of 'Industrialisation' are unavoidable.[54]

A very few literal-minded historians, it is true, do sometimes argue that there could be no such development as the Industrial Revolution before the name existed. Yet that objection, and the assumption behind it, should be firmly rejected. In the first place, numerous things with names don't exist in material form (e.g. *unicorns, dragons*)[55] while things without names may exist long before they are identified and named (e.g. *infectious diseases*). In particular, long-term trends generally take considerable periods of time before they become generally known and named. And, in the second place, there *were* in fact many miscellaneous references in eighteenth-century Britain to profound social, cultural, and technological innovations. These variants (discussed in the next section) provided a linguistic seedbed from which new terminologies eventually emerged.

My own preference is to differentiate political from industrial revolutions, by terming the latter Macro-Transformations. Yet while historians may propose, linguistic communities dispose. The known terminology has behind it (paradoxically) the great power of continuity. Hence the complex processes of Industrialisation are likely to continue starring as 'the Industrial Revolution' for some time to come.[56]

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53 Evolution was long ago canvassed as an alternative by N.S.B. Gras, *Industrial Evolution* (Oxford, 1930). But a recent evolutionary account still sticks with the traditional name, see M. Zmolek, *Rethinking the Industrial Revolution: Five Centuries of Transition from Agrarian to Industrial Capitalism in England* (Leiden, 2013).

54 See e.g. globally T. Kemp, *Historical Patterns of Industrialisation* (London, 1993); and, with reference to England, K. Honeyman, *Women, Gender and Industrialisation in England, 1700-1870* (Basingstoke, 2000).

55 'Existence' in this context refers to their material being, rather than their histories as intangible words, concepts and myths.

56 See e.g. T. Crump, *A Brief History of how the Industrial Revolution Changed the World* (London, 2010). Analysts of 'Big History' (studying the very long-term) and of climate change often end their stories with the 'Industrial Revolution' as the final 'big' turning point, for good or (in the case of climate change) for ill.

All these terminological changes were part of a long-term shift in majority perceptions, in western Europe and north America, from cyclical to linear Time.[57] Of course, deeply rooted attitudes did not change in complete synchronisation. A minority continued to espouse cyclical models of change: 'what goes round comes round'. The cyclical histories by Oswald Spengler and Arnold J. Toynbee in the early and mid-twentieth century are famous examples.[58] However, linearity has gradually become the default assumption in the West,[59] even to the extent that many people find it hard to imagine that earlier societies viewed things differently. Thus great revolutions (whether industrial or political) were no longer seen as conventional stages in a repetitive cycle but rather as new milestones on history's unique journey.

Interestingly, one indicative sign of a strengthened linearity was the novel habit of numbering the centuries in sequential order.[60] A pioneering example in England was a study by a clerical historian, who invited readers in 1756/7 to study *The Ecclesiastical History of England to the Eighteenth Century.* People in earlier eras often contrasted 'time out of mind' with 'nowadays'; and, if they sought greater precision for religious or administrative purposes, counted individual years.[61] But thinking in terms of successive centuries encouraged a sense of history's grand sweep, incorporating substantial differences between past and future. A classic example came from Denis Diderot, when confidently justifying his *Enyclopédie.* He announced that it would 'collect all the knowledge scattered over the face of the earth' and 'transmit this to those who will come after us, so that the work of past centuries may be useful to the following centuries'.[62] Each hundred-year span became unique. So in 1800 an Anglican preacher greeted, rather nervously, the 'solemn Spectacle'

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57 Corfield, *Time and the Shape of History*, pp. 49-56, 80-8. The shift was never absolute, as cyclical ideas have never disappeared, while elements of linearity also featured long before the eighteenth century – e.g. in religions with linear models of original sin and eventual redemption such as Christianity and Islam.

58 O. Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (London, 1926-9), 2 Vols; A. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (Oxford, 1934-59), 11 Vols.

59 For influential discussions on these themes, see R. Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, transl. and introduced by K. Tribe (New York, 2004). However, it is important to appreciate that there were elements of linearity in sundry thought systems before the eighteenth century, just as elements of cyclicality survive thereafter.

60 Century enumeration, first codified by Biblical scholars, spread slowly in public usage through the works of historians like F. Warner, *The Ecclesiastical History of England to the Eighteenth Century* (1756/7), 2 Vols.

61 Year counts might follow religious calendars (as in the Christian use of *Anno Domini* – years of the Lord) or enumerate regnal years, starting from the accession of a new monarch.

62 D. Diderot (1765) in S.J. Gendzier (ed.), *Denis Diderot's Encylopaedia: Selections* (New York, 1967), p. 92.

of the incoming nineteenth century, with the thought that the world was being 'launching into the current of an unexplored AGE, without knowing whither the tide will carry us'.[63]

Revolutionary terminology fitted easily into this sort of mind-set. Change might generate the unexpected. Throughout the eighteenth century, the term was used in a variety of socio-cultural contexts. One case came from the Whig essayist Joseph Addison in 1711. He observed in *The Spectator* that: 'I must observe a very great *revolution* that has happened in this article of good-breeding [manners]'.[69] He was jokingly contrasting a shift in styles: while city society had been traditionally ceremonious, country folk had been characterised by rustic simplicity. Yet in his own day, when smart society was abandoning excess formality, the country people were adopting stately ceremony. A further letter to the *Spectator* playfully put the story into geo-physical form, suggesting that, with every mile away from London, both dress and manners became more and more old-fashioned. Travellers could thus move backwards through time as they left the metropolis and headed into the provinces.[64] In reality, needless to say, that picture was not literally accurate.[65] This spatio-temporal assumption, however, implied that the expanding metropolis of London was in the vanguard of history's progression. And, in fact, by 1700 England's capital city was already experiencing something truly novel. Not only had it already surpassed in population its old rival, Paris but it was on the way to becoming by 1800 one of a select handful of million+ cities world-wide.[66]

International commerce was one of the key factors promoting economic transformation, both as cause and consequence. Hence another commentator in the *Spectator* wrote presciently in May 1711 that: 'Trade, without enlarging the British territories, has given us a Kind of additional Empire'.[73] And before long, the country's existing colonial possessions were being expanded and new ones added.

Daniel Defoe, the ever prolific wordsmith, defined the impact of commerce in the new vocabulary of upheaval. There has been a 'Revolution of Trade', he announced in 1728, adding that the 'Revolution in Trade, brought a Revolution in the very Nature of Things'. As a result, he argued, the poor no longer lived as dependent peasantry, toiling 'for Cottages

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63 G. Beaver, *Reflections on the Revolution of a Century: A Sermon ...* (Sherborne, 1800), p. 11. [69] L [J. Addison], *The Spectator,* no.119 (17 July 1711).

64 Ibid., no.129, 28 July 1711.

65 Historians of dress stress that fashions were quickly diffused across the country, via commercial networks focusing upon London and the expanding provincial towns: see e.g. A. Buck, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1979), pp. 137-8, 176-80, 198-200, 207-10.

66 By 1750 greater London (c.676,000 inhabitants) was Europe's most populous city, having surpassed Paris (c.565,000 inhabitants) and the declining Constantinople (c.625,000 inhabitants): see T. Chandler, *Four Thousand Years of Urban Growth: An Historical Census* (Lewiston, NY., 1987), p. 484. By 1800 London's population of almost one-million made it, like Edo (Tokyo) and Beijing, one of a highly select handful of great cities world-wide: P.J. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns, 1700-1800* (Oxford, 1972), p. 10. [73] *The Spectator*, no.69 (19 May 1711).

and [feudal] Liveries' but worked instead 'for Money, and to live, as we say, at their own hands.'[67] Again, his verdict, like many a snappy dictum, was exaggerated. The monetisation of the British economy was a very long process. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, confident references to the country's growing trading power were commonplace. Together, these commentaries signified a long-term process of commercialisation, tagged by some later economic historians, with a nod to Defoe, as a 'commercial revolution',[68] or, in heterodox
Marxist terms, as the advent of 'commercial capitalism'.

Complex socio-economic changes, however, were harder to pin down and to name than were political upheavals. Mid-eighteenth-century commentators were often vague and indeterminate. The world was 'turn'd upside down'. Things were 'topsy-turvy'. Traditional and formal distinctions of 'rank' and degree were mutating into what began as a much more flexible language of ill-defined social 'class'.[69] Distinctions between rich and poor had certainly not disappeared. Yet there was now a growing and diversifying middle stratum, with a greater acquisition of wealth and a visible display of conspicuous consumer goods. In 1754, two more sweeping declarations showed both the sense of change and a lack of precision in defining it: [70]

Were the same persons, who made a full tour of England thirty years ago, to make a fresh one now, they would find themselves in a land of enchantment [wrote one onlooker in the *Gentleman's Magazine*]. England is no more like to what England was then it resembles Borneo or Madagascar.

Also in 1754 an anonymous 'Rusticus' averred in the *Connoisseur* that:

Very extraordinary revolutions have already happened in the habits of this kingdom; and, as dress is subject to unaccountable changes, posterity may perhaps see without surprise our ladies strut about in breeches, while our men waddle in hoop-petticoats.[71]

Here the author's satirical prediction turned out to be halfway correct. 250 years later, many women in Britain do wear trousers (with or without 'strutting'), although in the western

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67 D. Defoe, *A Plan of the English Commerce: Being a Compleat Prospect of the Trade of this Nation ...* (London, 1728), p. 36, tracing changes since the sixteenth century: also available in W.R. Owens and P.N. Furbank (eds), *Political and Economic Writings of Daniel Defoe* (London, 2000), Vol. 7, p. 150.

68 See L.B. Packard, *The Commercial Revolution, 1400-1776* (London, 1930); and, from a later generation of scholarship, R. Davis, *A Commercial Revolution: English Overseas Trade in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London, 1967).

69 P.J. Corfield, 'Class by Name and Number in Eighteenth-Century England', *History*, 72 (1987), pp. 38-61; also in P.J. Corfield (ed.), *Language, History and Class* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 101-30; and available in website: penelopejcorfield.co.uk/ Essays Pdf7.

70 *Gentleman's Magazine*, no.30 (1754).

71 'Rusticus' in *The Connoisseur*, no.36 (3 Oct. 1754), p. 211.

world it is still unusual for men to wear dresses, notwithstanding the sporting of a dashing sarong in June 1998 by the fashion icon, footballer David Beckham.

Over time, the eighteenth-century commentator's tones tended to become more enthusiastic. In 1767, for instance, a report on new turnpike roads and early canals remarked excitedly that 'never was a more astonishing Revolution' than in England's transport in recent years, with new canals and turnpike roads. As a result, the mobility of goods and people became much easier. The English were literally 'released from treading the cautious steps of our forefathers'.[72] By the early 1780s, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was happy to observe that: 'The discoveries and improvements of the age ... diffuse a glory over this country unattainable by conquest or dominion'.[73]

Needless to say, not everyone approved of every trend. The cleric-cum-economist Dean Tucker, who was signally impressed with the new wealth and size of England's inland manufacturing towns, expressed alarm at apparent changes in gender roles – always a sensitive issue. Seeing women making advances to men in the social throng at fashionable resort city of

Bath in 1783, he sighed that 'revolutionary principles are continually gaining ground'.[74] In fact, it may be doubted whether female initiative in courtship was truly a novelty. The point was rather that the social mingling and relaxation of traditional restraints was part of the country's diversifying urbanisation, in which Bath was a magnificent urban showcase for conspicuous consumption, cultivated leisure, urban entertainments and commercialised medicine.[75] Interestingly, Tucker's nervous apprehension also implied a linear rather than cyclical view. His fears offered a pertinent reminder that linearity can encompass what is seen as change-for-theworse as well as *vice versa*. Changes in sexual mores are a case in point. Behaviours, which for some constitute liberation from stuffy conventionality, may represent, for others, a shocking collapse of public standards and personal morals.[76]

Together, these overview comments (and many others like them) on socio/economic/cultural change in eighteenth-century Britain have a number of common characteristics. They tend to be sweeping and generalised, often lacking specific details. They are certain that things are changing but often unsure precisely how to name the trends. Increasingly, they appear to be expecting further transformations to follow, rather than a reversion to olden times. Their open-endedness hence tended to indicate linear rather than cyclical assumptions. For example, some pioneering medical reformers begin to urge that

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72 H.S. Homer, *An Enquiry in the Means of Preserving and Improving the Public Roads of This Kingdom ...* (Oxford, 1767), p. 4.

73 Cited in M.D. George, *England in Transition: Life and Work in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth, 1931; in 1964 edn), p. 107.

74 Josiah Tucker, cited in Corfield, *Impact*, p. 23; and G. Shelton, *Dean Tucker and Eighteenth-Century Economic and Political Thought* (London, 1981), p. 253.

75 Corfield, *Impact*, pp. 52-9; R.S. Neale, *Bath: A Social History, 1680-1850* (London, 1981).

76 For difficulties in dating and defining long-term trends in sexual behaviour, see references in n.98 below.

the hideous disease of smallpox could be eradicated, not only in Britain but throughout the world (as was, remarkably, achieved within 200 years).[77] Often the emphasis is upon generic social and cultural transition, but sometimes specific economic and technological innovations are noted. Transformations of this kind are generally assumed to be non-violent and gradualist.

Evolution is subsumed within the word 'revolution', referring to the magnitude of the outcomes of even many small incremental changes. And the tone, especially when invoking technology, becomes increasingly optimistic over time – even euphoric. An admirer of the power of science in 1836 was particularly rhapsodic about the advent of a completely new world. No cyclical history for him: 'The world will take a quite different appearance than it has had hitherto to man; productive of a thousand times more means for human happiness, than the human race may be wanting; – a paradise beyond the common conceptions'.[78] The eighteenth-century mantra of Improvement is mutating visibly into the Victorian confidence in Progress.[79]

There is no agreement between these contemporary commentators about a single start date for fundamental change. Defoe might correctly trace England's overseas commercial development back to Elizabethan times but others tended to make comparisons (as is often done) with the generation before their own or with life before some big event in recent times.

One justly celebrated account, penned in 1807 by the poet-cum-historian-and-essayist Robert Southey, deserves reconsideration in this context. Initially, his analysis appeared under a pseudonym, in the guise of *Letters from England, Translated from the Spanish*. Pretending to be a curious outsider was a well-known literary device which allowed an author to draw fresh attention to quotidian developments that were otherwise too easily taken for granted. Southey's imaginary Spanish gentleman was far from happy with every trend but he was mightily certain that multitudinous transformations were afoot, and dramatic ones too:[80]

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77 See variously J. Haygarth, *A Sketch of a Plan to Exterminate the Casual Smallpox from Great Britain ...* (London, 1793); G. Pearson, *An Inquiry concerning the History of the Cowpox, Principally with a View to Supersede and Extinguish the Smallpox* (London, 1798); and context in D.A. Koplow, *Smallpox: The Fight to Eradicate a Global Scourge* (Berkeley, Calif., 2003).

78 J.A. Etzler, *The Paradise within the Reach of All Men, without Labour, by Powers of Nature and Machinery: An Address to all Intelligent Men* (1st pub. Pittsburgh, c.1833; London, 1836), Pt 2, p. 212.

79 See D. Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven, 1990); J.B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into its Origin and Growth* (London, 1920); and P. Bowler, *The Invention of Progress: The Victorians and the Past* (Oxford, 1989).

80 R. Southey, *Letters from England: By Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella – Translated from the Spanish* (London, 1807), ed. J. Simmons (London, 1951), pp. 362-3.

Perhaps no kingdom ever experienced so great a change in so short a course of years, without some violent state convulsion, as England has done during the present reign [i.e. post-1760]. I wish I could procure materials to show the whole contrast: – A metropolis doubled in extent; taxes quintupled; the value of money depreciated as rapidly as if new mines had been discovered; canals cut from one end of the island to the other; travelling made so expeditious that the internal communication is tenfold what it was; the invention of the steam-engine, almost as great an *epocha* as the invention of printing; the manufacturing system carried to its utmost point; the spirit of commerce extended to every thing; an empire lost in America, and another gained in the East: – these would be parts of the picture. The alteration extends to the minutest things, even to the dress and manners of every rank of society.

Four specific points about this listing are worth highlighting. In the first place, it's very comprehensive, embracing urban, financial, transportation, technological, industrial, commercial, imperial and social trends. All these have been celebrated (and in some cases also debunked) by later historians, often under the title of 'revolution'. Secondly, the timetabling seems clear but cannot be taken too literally. Southey's summary suggested that all these novel developments had taken place since 1760, while earlier commentators (writing before that date) had also projected the origins of change backwards by some generations. Complex transformations turn out to have many complex birth-dates.

Thirdly, Southey's commentary shows that educated contemporaries by the early nineteenth century were no longer lamenting the loss of the American colonies but were instead celebrating the buoyant speed of Britain's imperial expansion in India. Majority opinion was directed outwards, untroubled as yet by anti-colonialism. And, fourthly and very notably, there is Southey's quick and just appreciation of the impact of technological innovations: the new steam engine, put on a par with the advent of printing; and the new '*manufacturing system*'. So no

'Industrial Revolution' in so many words; but a verbal equivalent. In 1815, Robert Owen's *Observations on the Effect of the Manufacturing System* picked up the term,[81] confident that it would be understood by his readers. These usages were acknowledging not just the growth of industrial output but the long-term implications of the systematisation of mass production into factories.[82]

Even the astute Southey, however, did not cover everything. He might have mentioned the growing use of inoculation, followed by vaccination, against smallpox. That development led the way towards today's world-wide medical intervention against infectious diseases

81 R. Owen, *Observations on the Effect of the Manufacturing System, with Hints for the Improvement of those Parts which are most Injurious to Health and Morals* (London, 1815).
82 Far from all production was moved into factories; but these buildings came to epitomise industrial change: see e.g. the classic account by P. Mantoux, *The Industrial Revolution in the Eighteenth Century: An Outline*

and preventable illnesses. He might have mentioned the onset of unprecedented global population growth, triggered both by rising fertility and by declining mortality, especially among the very young. Or the spread of literacy, among women as well as men. Or the emergence of the professions. And he might have mentioned the pioneering experiments to tame electricity – which ultimately became even more potent in its applications than the steam-engine. But it's hard to identify absolutely every significant long-term trend that is unfolding under one's nose. (Can you?)

Collectively, these eighteenth-century comments added up to a strong acknowledgement of insidious and complex innovations, whether for praise or blame.[90] Change did not preclude the survival of continuity. As already noted, that pervasive feature of life has its own power and tenacity. But the balance between continuity and change was shifting in the course of the long eighteenth century, even if not every implication was immediately apparent. A French visitor to Britain in 1816, who arrived expecting the victor nation of the prolonged European fighting to be exhausted, was astonished at the country's affluence. As the dynamic hub of its international networks, it displayed an 'unlooked for opulence, [which] overflowed with its treasures the British Empire'.[91] All such comments, of course, remain subjective, some more so than others.

Yet together they spelt fundamental change.

CIII Varieties of Macro-Change

Scholars have been earnestly debating these terms and themes at least since Arnold Toynbee's days. But it's clear that a subtler and more varied vocabulary is needed for purposes of clarification. As it is, one common pattern is for a bold historian to identify a new 'revolution', only to be followed by a chorus of criticism cutting these claims down to size. Or at times it works in reverse. A bold new revisionist study debunks an upheaval that has the name of

'revolution' and a debate follows to restore its revolutionary status.

Students of eighteenth-century Britain often express bewilderment at the proliferation of rival claims and the absence of consensus, after more than a century of debates since the 1880s.

of the Beginnings of the Modern Factory System in England, transl. M. Vernon (London, 1929); and case studies in G. Rimmer, *British Factory Towns during the First Industrial Revolution* (London, 1970).

[90] For the rival strands of optimism and pessimism, see P.J. Corfield, research-in-progress on eighteenthcentury British culture as observed by contemporaries. [91] Cited in George, *England in Transition*, p. 112.

Was the long eighteenth century a period of conservative tradition or one of modernising innovation?[92] One of neo-feudal aristocratic revival[93] or post-revolutionary commercial/ imperial expansion?[94] Was it a stable, deferential and pious society dedicated to 'church and

king'?[83] Or one where a slow-moving process of secularisation was emerging insidiously across the culture?[84]

Was there also a gender revolution?[85] A sexual revolution?[86] The advent of the modern family?[87] The invention of the 'modern' personality?[88] Was there an Enlightenment in Europe or not? And, if so, did the offshore British Isles partake in the process?[89]

Can the economy in these years be helpfully defined as 'capitalist'?[90] And, if so, of what sort? Or 'mercantilist'? And if so, meaning what exactly?[91] Was there a financial

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83 For two contrastingly different conservative interpretations from different generations, see L.B. Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (London, 1929), esp. Vol. 1, pp. 1-76; and J.C.D. Clark, *English Society, 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice* (Cambridge, 1985 edn).

84 Contrast views in J. Morris, 'Secularisation and Religious Experience', *Historical Journal*, 55 (2012), pp. 195-219; D. Erdozain, '"Cause is not Quite What it Used to be": The Return of Secularisation', *English Historical Review*, 127 (2012), pp. 377-400; and P.J. Corfield, '"An Age of Infidelity": Secularisation in Eighteenth-Century England' (in publication pipeline).

85 R. Trumbach, *Sex and the Gender Revolution, Vol. 1: Heterosexuality and the Third Gender in Enlightenment London* (Chicago, 1998).

86 See alternative chronologies, ranging from the later seventeenth century in F. Dabhoiwala, *The Origins of Sex: A History of the First Sexual Revolution* (London, 2012), to the long nineteenth century in H. Cook, *The Long Sexual Revolution: English Women, Sex and Contraception, 1800-1975* (Oxford, 2004); and the 1960s in S. Szreter and K. Fisher, *Sex before the Sexual Revolution: Intimate Life in England, 1918-63* (Cambridge, 2010).

87 R. Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, 1978).

88 See variously L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (Harmondsworth, 1979), pp. 268-9; and D. Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, 2004).

89 See R. Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Making of the Modern World* (London, 2000); and ensuing debates.

90 Relatively few historians currently apply this term simply to eighteenth-century Britain, but see e.g. P. Sharpe, *Adapting to Capitalism: Working Women in the English Economic, 1700-1850* (Basingstoke, 1996).

91 On these debates, see D.C. Coleman (ed.), *Revisions in Mercantilism* (London, 1969).

revolution? [92] An agricultural revolution? [93] A commercial revolution?[106] A transport revolution?[107] A consumer revolution?[108]

[92] For the eighteenth-century debates at different times, compare overviews by F. O'Gorman, 'The Recent Historiography of the Hanoverian Regime', *Historical Journal*, 29 (1986), pp. 1005-20; and P.J. Corfield, 'British History: The Exploding Galaxy', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 34 (2011), pp. 517-26.

[93] As argued by H. Wellenreuther, *Repräsentation und Grossgrundbesitz in England, 1730-70* (Stuttgart, 1979).

[94] See e.g. C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Oxford, 2004).

Or, yet again, was there an interim stage of proto-industrialisation?[109] Was there (as already noted) a big-bang eighteenth-century Industrial Revolution or a slow-moving Industrious Revolution; or was the whole idea nothing but a myth?[110] Did the era actually 'unbind Prometheus' by setting science free to revolutionise production (Prometheus being a mythic figure who represented the spirit of scientific enquiry)? Or are claims for a scientific revolution overdone?[111] And, above all, can any or all of these conflicting verdicts be reconciled?

It's helpful, when responding, to begin by differentiating between different sorts of revolution/evolution. Often one term is used when the other is really what is meant. Hence let historians stick to 'revolution' as the well-established name for great political overthrows of tyrannies which lead to democratic (or constitutional) regime change, taking the French Revolution as the paradigm case.

At the same time, however, let's also talk about 'transformations' or evolution or macrochange for epic long-term developments, which take place incrementally, often with many shortterm oscillations. It is true that Evolution[112] just does not have the same radical ring to it as does Revolution. Nonetheless, the fact that many forms of socio/cultural/intellectual transformations may be slow in their unfolding does not detract from their massive significance over time.

Finally, three contrasting late eighteenth-century usages highlight again the case for linguistic variegation. The following three references to 'revolution' are all approving in tone. Yet their applications are very different. Viewing events in France with enthusiasm, Thomas

Paine announced in 1790 that '*The Revolution in France is certainly a forerunner of other*

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92 P.G.M. Dickson, *The Financial Revolution in England: A Study of the Development of Public Credit, 16881756* (London, 1967): C. Wennerlind, *Casualties of Credit: The English Financial Revolution, 1620-1720* (Cambridge, Mass., 2011); and P. Temin and H-J. Voth, *Prometheus Shackled: Goldsmiths Banks and England's Financial Revolution after 1700* (Oxford, 2013).

93 Contrast E. Kerridge, *The Agricultural Revolution* (London, 1967), locating change in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; with J.D. Chambers and G. Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution, 1750-1880*

(London, 1966), focusing upon the long nineteenth century. A later synthesis sees lengthy evolution combining both periods: see M. Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England: The Transformation of the Agrarian Economy, 1500-1850* (Cambridge, 1996).

106 See examples cited above n.72.

107 Again for an array of datings, see F.D. Baron, *The Transport Revolution, 1750-1830* (London, 1967); P.S. Bagwell, *The Transport Revolution from 1770* (London, 1988); A.D. Cameron, *Thomas Telford and the Transport Revolution* (London, 1979); and P. Hay, *Brunel: His Achievements in the Transport Revolution* (Reading, 1973).

108 N. McKendrick, J. Brewer and J. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialisation of Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1982).

109 For these debates see L.A. Clarkson, *Proto-Industrialisation: The First Stage of Industrialisation?* (Basingstoke, 1985).

110 See works cited above, n.48.

111 Compare the different approaches in H. Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science, 1300-1800* (London, 1950); H.F. Kearney, *Origins of the Scientific Revolution* (London, 1964); and I.B. Cohen, *The Newtonian Revolution: With Illustrations of the Transmission of Scientific Ideas* (Cambridge, 1980). 112 See P.J. Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea* (Berkeley, Calif., 1989).

revolutions'.[94] The context was clearly socio/political, and the impact both immediate and longterm.[95] Two years earlier, the agricultural writer Arthur Young welcomed the successful technology transfer of mechanised spinning between England's cotton to woollen industries. *'A revolution is making'*, he noted presciently. Here the context was socio/industrial, and the pace of change at times rapid, at times evolutionary. And in 1791 the Dissenting clergyman-cumchemist-cum-political-theorist Joseph Priestley mused happily upon the spread of literacy and education: *'We may all perceive that we must be at the eve of great revolutions, such as will rouse the faculties, and call forth the exertions of great numbers* [of people], *at present, probably, unknown'*.[96] The context, this time, was socio/cultural and the pace of change, although not its significance, was generally slow but hard to reverse.

These three authors were all sharply perceptive. They were, however, clearly naming different modes and types of historical development. For them, the powerful word 'revolution' came to mind. Yet, after so many debates, it's time for today's analysts to find a more sophisticated and variegated vocabulary. There are plenty of choices, from Transformation or

94 Letter from Thomas Paine to Edmund Burke, 17 Jan. 1790: Sheffield City Library, Wentworth Wodehouse Muniments; also in Northamptonshire Record Office (A/iv/73a); repr. in *Durham University Journal*, 43 (1951), pp. 50-4; and cited in F. O'Gorman, *The Whig Party and the French Revolution* (London, 1967), p. 44.

95 A. Young, *Annals of Agriculture* (1788), cited in Corfield, *Impact*, p. 98.

96 J. Priestley, *The Proper Objects of Education in the Present State of the World* ... (London, 1791), p. 14.

Macro-Change to Evolution or Micro-Change.[97] Moreover, let's avoid having to decide between either/or alternatives. Long-term developments are not obliged to be only rapid throughout or only slow-paced. Sometimes they are modulated, varying in momentum over time. Come on, colleagues! Time to differentiate our REVOLLUSIONS!

97 See Corfield, *Time and the Shape of History*, pp. 75-8, 108-11, for variants of gradual change, such as: alteration, adaptation, acceleration, amendment, entropy, fluctuation, flux, improvement, innovation, mutation, modification, modulation, progression, refinement, transformation, transfiguration, transmogrification, transition, variation, vicissitudes (let alone all the terms for decay, degeneration and decrepitude); as well as variants for dramatic change, such as: break-point, breakdown, broken symmetry, broken lines, caesura, cataclysm, catastrophe, conjuncture, convulsion, diagenesis, dialectical transition, disaster, dissolution, hiatus, pathway shift, paradigm shift, phase transition, radical discontinuity, rupture, schism, sea-change, step-change, take-off, turn, tilting point, turning-point, or watershed.

Key figures

ANTHONY COLLINS (1676–1729)

A leading thinker of the Freethinking Movement in England, Collins wrote *A Discourse of Freethinking* (1713).

DENIS DIDEROT (1713–1784)

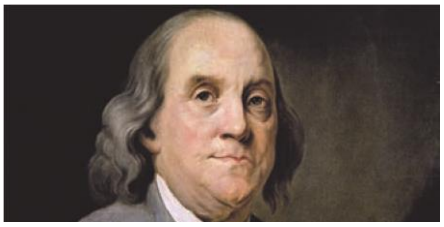
Diderot was the editor (with Jean le Rond d'Alembert) of the great *Encyclopaedia* (1750–65), but was also one of the most diverse writers in French literature. Apart from writing treatises, such as his *Supplement to the Voyage of Bougainville* (1772), he proved to be a brilliant writer in art criticism (for example, his reviews for the *Salons*: see below) and in avant-garde novels (such as *Jacques the Fatalist and his Master* (1796)).

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (1706–1790)

Franklin was both a leading Enlightenment thinker in America and a leader of the 'Patriot', or Revolutionary, Movement, which resulted in the 13 American colonies breaking away from Britain. As a scientist, he made significant advances in the understanding of electricity; and as an inventor, he created many practical devices, such as bifocal lenses.

DAVID HUME (1711–1776)

Hume is often regarded as one of the greatest thinkers in Western philosophy, and he inspired Adam Smith, Immanuel Kant, Jeremy Bentham and Charles Darwin. In *A Treatise on Human Nature* (1738) he argued that we can apply scientific reasoning to moral and ethical issues. He suggested that we must create a 'science of man' that would use scientific reasoning to understand human nature itself.



FRANCIS HUTCHESON (1694–1746)

Hutcheson spread the word about the scientific method of Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton, with their emphasis on experimentation, direct observation and evidence. Hutcheson also expressed perfectly the Enlightenment belief that the main task of reason and science is to increase human wellbeing, famously commenting that their role was to 'produce the greatest good for the greatest numbers'.

IMMANUAL KANT (1724–1804)

Kant was a leading German *philosophe* (see below), best known for his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781).

GOTTFRIED LEIBNIZ (1646–1716)

'The philosopher's philosopher', Leibniz was one of the most complex thinkers of the Enlightenment. In the field of physics, he guessed the nature of what we now call kinetic energy. He was equally a pioneer in mathematics, and is regarded as one of the great inventors of mathematical logic. He also suggested the foundation of the Berlin Academy of Sciences, which was opened in 1700.

MOSES MENDELSSOHN (1729–1786)

9780170243988

(1737–1809)

Paine was an English-born philosopher who found fame and success as a political thinker for the American colonists during their rebellion against British authority. In 1776, he published *Common Sense,* which drew upon the political theories of John Locke and JeanJacques Rousseau to prove that it was 'common sense' that the colonies should free themselves from British rule, both for reasons of principle and for practical reasons.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU (1712–1778)

Rousseau made his first contribution to the French Enlightenment by writing *Encyclopaedia* articles for his friend Diderot. His most important political work was *Of the Social Contract* (1762), which further developed John Locke's idea that rulers – even kings – only rule because they have a 'contract' or agreement to look after the wellbeing of their people.

Mendelssohn was one of the most brilliant scholars of the Jewish faith in Germany. Historian Dorinda Outram regards him as 'the first major Jewish figure to intervene in the Enlightenment'.

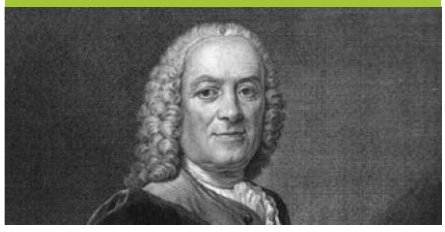
THOMAS PAINE

Rousset represented one of the most extreme forces of what historian Margaret C. Jacob calls the 'radical Enlightenment'. He was the leader of a extreme, secret group of freethinkers in the Dutch Republic, who wrote a shocking document titled *The Treatise of the Three Impostors* (1719), which declared the revered leaders of three great world religions to be impostors.

VOLTAIRE (FRANçOIS- MARIE AROUET) (1694–1778)

Voltaire enjoyed a long life, wrote numerous works, and effectively informed public opinion on important political and social issues. After visiting England (1726–29), he turned to serious political and social commentary, criticising France by praising England in his *Letters Concerning the English Nation* (1733). He had powerful friends, ranging from Madame de Pompadour in France to King Frederick II in Prussia, which he visited in 1750–53. He settled in Geneva in 1755, and then lived at Ferney, France, from 1760, becoming the guiding spirit of the 'philosophic' movement. He wrote many articles on liberal ideas such as tolerance, and supported the idea of deism, or 'natural religion'.

JEAN ROUSSET DE MISSY (1686–1762)



MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT (1759–1797)

Wollstonecraft was one of the first to understand that society created different conditions for the education and training for girls, resulting in the domination of women by men. In 1787, she challenged the Enlightenment itself by saying – in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* – that women should be given a proper education and a genuine chance of realising their potential.

9780170243988

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What was the Enlightenment?

In this chapter, we examine the intellectual movement called the Enlightenment. More than any other movement, the Enlightenment helped to define our modern world. Although it is recognised as one of the most important periods of intense thought and debate in Western civilisation, the Enlightenment remains difficult to define. Its name is based on the word 'enlighten', which means to throw light on something and to dispel 'darkness', which symbolises ignorance. The idea of 'light' signifies knowledge and, more importantly, the ability to think about issues in a reasonable way.

Revolutions in ideas do not just suddenly happen, and it was a combination of many factors that led to the flowering of Enlightenment thought. In particular, the process of rational thinking stemmed from the 'scientific revolution' of the 17th century. The scientific spirit of people such as Isaac Newton (1642–1727) inspired reasoned discussion of other subjects, including politics, religion, society, ethics and art. These discussions in turn inspired 18th-century French writers such as Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Denis Diderot to develop their thoughtful new ideas about the way human beings organise their lives. This spirit of rational thought also proved to be very flexible, evidenced by its rapid spread to various countries such as England, Spain and Scotland and even to Britain's distant American colonies.

❮ *Reading of the Tragedy 'L'Orphelin de la Chine' in the Salon of Madame Geoffrin*, 1812, by Anicet-Charles Gabriel Lemonnier (1743–1824)

The Enlightenment today

Often it is difficult to imagine how or why something that occurred 300 years ago is relevant or significant to today's world. In 2013 several events – including an address to the United Nations by a 15-year-old girl, the publication of a

Inquiry question

+ What was the Enlightenment, and how did it spread so widely?

book and a television documentary – in different ways each highlight just why the Enlightenment remains relevant to our world.

Malala yousafzai at the united nations

In 2013 the world's attention focused on the extraordinary human dignity and courage of the 15-year-old Pakistani schoolgirl, Malala Yousafzai. Malala had been brutally and senselessly shot in the head by the radical Islamic group the Taliban in 2012, simply – as her attacker told her later – because she was campaigning for girls' rights to have an education. Malala survived the attempted murder, after cranial surgery, and continued to campaign even more strongly for the universal right to education. In July 2013, this resilient and brave young person stood up before the entire United Nations General Assembly and, in a small, clear voice, outlined why she would continue her campaign despite Taliban threats to shoot her again and kill her. In that moment, the great central idea of the Enlightenment – that all humans naturally have rights, which apply equally to everyone – was crystallised in this one vulnerable young figure.

For Malala herself, there is not a shred of doubt about universal rights. In early September 2013, when she addressed the United Nations General Assembly, her speech was filled with determination: Dear sisters and brothers, we realise the importance of light when we see darkness. We realise the importance of our voice when we are silenced. In the same way when we were in Swat [a district of Pakistan near Afghanistan], we realised the importance of pens and books when we saw the guns. The extremists … are afraid of books and pens. The power of education frightens them. They are afraid of women. The power of the voice of women frightens them.

For the United Nations deputies assembled that day, there was no possible doubt either: Malala was voicing principles that were formed during the Enlightenment, that are universal, and that still resonate today. In October 2013, the European Parliament gave Malala the highest award for human rights, the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. She was even considered for the Nobel Peace Prize, but was happy when it was awarded to an organisation trying to rid the world of chemical weapons. She has also published her story as *I am Malala* (2013).

By contrast, for the leaders of the terrorist group the Taliban, these 'universal' principles and rights are

AAP/AFP/StanHonda

sourCe 1.1 Malala Yousafzai prepares to address the United Nations General Assembly in 2013.

not universal at all; they have simply been made up by Western powers such as America and Britain. The Taliban claim that Malala is being used as a stooge for Western propaganda. They state that they intend to shoot her a second time and ensure that she dies.

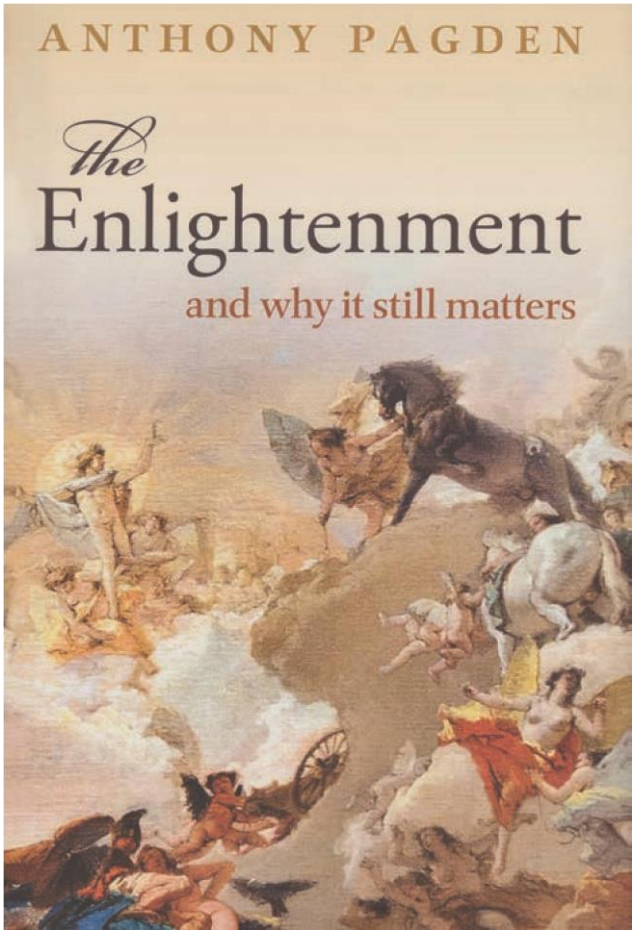
For the author and possibly some readers, this question remains critical. The debate about the Enlightenment has been catapulted from deep past history to the very present, and it is a burning debate about the sort of world we hope to live in. In fact, it is probably even more urgent in our 21st century than it ever was in the 18th century.

anthony pagden

In 2013 the historian Anthony Pagden published a book with an unusual title: *The Enlightenment: And Why it Still Matters*. Previously, scholars would probably have called such a book *The Enlightenment*, without adding the second part of the title. This is because the Enlightenment of the 18th century was unquestionably seen during the 19th and 20th centuries as a crucially important period in the development of Western thought, either for good or for bad. In our 21st century, however, writers such as Pagden must rethink whether the Enlightenment is still relevant to us today. Like Malala, Pagden himself believes in the universal principles of the Enlightenment, but knows that not everybody accepts them.

Pagden believes that the Enlightenment has not just shaped the modern world; it has also shaped us. In the course of this textbook we will discover the origin of many of our own key ideas and core values. Pagden admits, however, that 'universal' Enlightenment ideals are not

universally accepted around the world. For example, the Enlightenment taught people to question traditional religious authority. Nonetheless, there are millions of faithful people – such as Muslims, Christians and Jews – who hate the idea of questioning their religion. The Enlightenment taught people to respect different cultures and different religions, and yet the rise of fundamentalist religions, accompanied by terrorism, has shown that not



sourCe 1.2 *The Enlightenment and why it still matters* by Anthony Pagden, Oxford University Press, 2013.

everybody believes in religious tolerance. For Pagden, these new and dangerous conditions make it crucial to reconsider what Enlightenment ideas can mean to us in our own age. **sheila hayMan and shuyun sun**

In September 2013, two other historians offered us their perspective on the Enlightenment in the documentary film *Heroes of the Enlightenment: The Power of Knowledge*. Sheila Hayman and Shuyun Sun do not hesitate to call the 18th-century thinkers 'heroes'. They have no doubt that they should still be considered our intellectual heroes. In their introduction, they argue that the modern rights we enjoy today – such as the right to sit in a café and chat freely about any issue, and the right to sit in a library and access

any information we wish – are products of the Enlightenment. They present the Enlightenment as a heroic battle for the possession of knowledge, in which the courageous thinkers challenged the way repressive monarchies and oppressive churches tried to control human knowledge. They believe that the Enlightenment has shaped the world in which we live today, and influenced the way you and I actually think. This two-hour documentary contains eight fascinating case studies of leading Enlightenment thinkers.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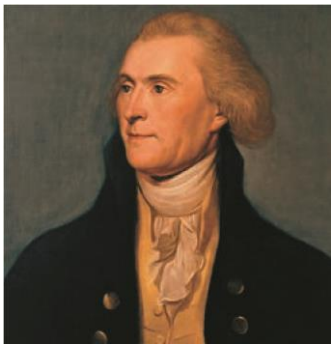
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sourCe 1.3 Leading Enlightenment thinkers (clockwise from top left) Isaac Newton, Erasmus Darwin, Nicolas de Condorcet, the Marquis de Pombal, Thomas Jefferson, Frederick the Great of Prussia

What does 'Enlightenment' mean?

Like many historical names, the term 'Enlightenment' is a single noun, suggesting that it was just one movement. Historians know, however, that intellectual movements are more complicated than this. When we start asking questions, we realise that the Enlightenment is very complex.

Our first main task is to ask what we mean by 'the Enlightenment'. When did it start? What caused the upsurge of new thinking? Did it occur because existing authorities, such as the monarchies and the Church, were weakening? Did it occur because human beings have always tended to discuss and argue about the way we organise our world? Why and how did this spirit of rational discussion spread so quickly and so broadly to so many countries?

The Enlightenment was extremely diverse and varied. Nearly all of the *philosophes* disagreed on virtually all the big questions they debated; they even changed their views and contradicted themselves in their own works. The main activists in the movement were writers, including novelists, journalists, social thinkers and scientists. Some of the greatest thinkers included:

+ Montesquieu, Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert in France
+ Edmund Burke and Anthony Collins in England

+ David Hume and Adam Smith in Scotland
+ Gottfried Leibniz, Christian Wolff and Moses Mendelssohn in the German states
+ Jean Rousset de Missy in the Dutch Republic
+ Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson in the American colonies.

When did the enlightenment occur?

Like most ideological movements, the Enlightenment remains difficult to date: there is no absolute starting point or end point for the appearance of new ideas. The Enlightenment is often described as extending over much of the 18th century, from the 1720s to the 1770s. This course, however, asks us to study the Enlightenment from 1750, when Paris emerged as the great centre of Enlightenment thought, until 1789, when the French Revolution began and a new generation of thinkers applied Enlightenment ideas to actually create a new society.

Key moments of the enlightenment

1721 Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* appeared, providing a new model of criticism of French society, apparently by naïve foreigners.

1725 The Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences was founded in Russia.

1726 Voltaire travelled to England to study its institutions.

1728 Ephraim Chambers published *Cyclopaedia*, or a *Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, which inspired Diderot's *Encyclopaedia* in France.

1733 Voltaire's *Letters Concerning the English Nation* was published in England; it was published a year later in France.

1734 The University of Göttingen was founded.

1743 The American Philosophical Society was founded in Philadelphia.

1748 Montesquieu published *The Spirit of the Laws*, proposing the separation of the powers of the legislature, executive and judiciary.

Madame Geoffrin opened her 'salon' (social gathering), creating one of the great venues for Enlightenment thought and discussion.

1751 Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert published the first volume of *The Encyclopaedia*.

Pope Benedict XIV condemned Freemasonry.

1752 *The Encyclopaedia* was condemned.

1759 Voltaire published his famous 'philosophical story', *Candide*.

1761 Jean-Jacques Rousseau published his romantic novel *Julie, or the New Heloise*.

1764 Intellectual women in France, such as Madame Necker and Mademoiselle Julie de Lespinasse, created a new type of 'salon' (or social meeting for intellectual discussion).

1771 Antoine Lavoisier discovered the composition of air.

Where did the enlightenment occur?

Paris was the 'capital' of the 'republic of letters'. Its brilliant salons, coffee houses, academies and clubs provided places for discussion during the 18th century. Because of royal censorship, however, certain *philosophes*, such as Voltaire and Rousseau, fled Paris to live in regional France or in Switzerland.

London, together with other English cities, such as Birmingham, was the 'cradle' in which early Enlightenment thought was born in the 17th century and continued to flourish in the 18th century. In England, learned bodies such as the Royal Society were crucial to scientific and enlightened thought.

Edinburgh was an important centre of Enlightenment thought, and the home of the Enlightenment in Scotland. Its leading philosopher was David Hume.

Amsterdam, capital of the Dutch Republic, was a vital centre of Enlightenment thought. Some of the most radical ideas of the Enlightenment originated there. The reasons for this, says historian Margaret C. Jacob, included that the government was tolerant of radical discussion, and that the city hosted many Protestants who had been forced to flee their homes in France by religious intolerance.

Berlin was the capital of the large German state of Prussia, ruled by Frederick the Great, who encouraged Enlightenment thought by, for example, improving the Prussian Academy of Sciences and by inviting leading *philosophes*, such as Voltaire, to live and work in his palace.

Geneva was the largest and wealthiest city in Switzerland and, like Amsterdam, was profoundly changed by the arrival of large numbers of Protestants fleeing France after the revocation in 1685 of the Edict of Nantes (which in 1598 had granted substantial rights to French Protestants). It was often referred to as 'a Rome for the Protestants'. Jean-Jacques Rousseau was born there.

Vienna was the capital of a country then known as the Hapsburg Empire: a sprawling combination of many national groups, which was difficult to unify or govern. It was the seat of two determined monarchs: first Empress Maria Theresa and then Emperor Joseph II, the latter of whom adopted Enlightenment thought to create a more modern state and economy, and to apply rational principles to its organisation.

SOURCE 1.4 European centres of the Enlightenment, 1789

The Enlightenment was centred in Europe, particularly in France, but had a number of other centres of intense activity, including Scotland and the Republic of Holland. Elsewhere, states such as Prussia and Russia hosted Enlightenment thinkers because their rulers hoped to use enlightened thought for their own purposes: to improve their countries. The Enlightenment affected many other countries, such as England and Italy, and even extended to the American colonies.

Immanuel Kant: What is Enlightenment?

The most important aspect of the term 'Enlightenment' is that educated people in the 18th century used the term *themselves* to describe their time; they themselves felt that they were living in a time of intense intellectual activity. For us, as historians, the most valuable primary source reveals how people defined their own experience at the time.

For the German *philosophe* Immanuel Kant, the essence of the Enlightenment was the human ability to think independently, free of traditional understandings, superstitions or old-fashioned authorities:

> Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. [Some people] lack the resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. 'Have the courage to use your own reason!' That is the motto of enlightenment. For this enlightenment, however, nothing is required but freedom … It is the freedom to make public use of one's reason at every point. But I hear on all sides, 'Do not argue!' The officer says, 'Do not argue but drill!' The [priest] says, 'Do not argue but believe!' Everywhere there is restriction on freedom. The public use of one's reason must always be free, and it alone can bring about enlightenment among men.
>
> If we were asked, 'Do we now live in an *enlightened age*?' the answer is 'No', but we do live in an *age of enlightenment*. As things now stand, much is lacking which prevents men from being, or easily becoming, capable of correctly using their own reason in religious matters with assurance and free from outside direction. But, on the other hand, we have clear indications that the field has now been opened wherein men may freely deal with these things and that the obstacles to general enlightenment … are gradually being reduced. In this respect, this is the age of enlightenment, or the century of Frederick.
>
> Immanuel Kant, *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?*, 1784

Questions

1. What does Kant mean by his term 'tutelage'? What is the dictionary meaning of this word?
2. What is the motto (guiding idea) of the Enlightenment?
3. What does Kant appear to mean by the term 'reason'?
4. Why does Kant believe that he *did not* live in an 'enlightened age', but *did* live in an 'age of enlightenment'? What is the difference?
5. Who was the 'Frederick' mentioned by Kant? Why might Kant have admired him?
6. How far does Kant seem to feel the process of enlightenment has progressed in his time?
7. What sorts of organisations and people might have felt threatened by Kant's idea that people should be free to use their own reason and to think independently?

We evaluate the **reliability** of a document by asking what makes this passage a good source of information about the Enlightenment. We identify its **contestability** by identifying what limitations

continued

it might have, and how other people might disagree with it. What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of this document in helping us understand what people at the time thought the Enlightenment actually was?

The Encyclopaedia

In France, too, people tried consciously to define what the Enlightenment was. In 1751, the French writers Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert published the first volume of their great *Encyclopaedia*. This is judged to be the greatest Enlightenment work. The volumes themselves contained useful factual knowledge about trades and industries, but they did more than provide information. They also defined what the authors thought the Enlightenment was.

As historians, we carefully examine images that explain an idea visually, because they reveal what people were thinking and feeling. In 1772, Diderot commissioned the artist Charles Cochin to design a front-page picture for a later edition of his *Encyclopaedia*. He probably instructed the artist what to show. This image is therefore very much the editor Diderot's statement, and we need to listen to what he is trying to tell us.

The picture is not easy for a modern person to 'read'. What is Diderot trying to tell us? We look into a great building with classical-style columns. Look at the top of the picture. A female figure, representing 'reason', is pulling away a veil to reveal the naked female figure of 'truth'. As she does so, a brilliant burst of light shines out, driving away dark clouds. There are more than 30 other smaller figures below them, many carrying scientific instruments or machines, including a printing press (seen at the left).

sourCe 1.5 Charles Cochin's frontispiece of Diderot's *Encyclopaedia*, 1772

Why did Diderot seem to think that his writers had helped 'reason' (the rational use of human intelligence) to uncover the truth? What exactly was the truth that he had uncovered? Why did he think that truth had been covered until then? Who did he think had covered up the truth? And how exactly did scientific instruments and printing presses help in this process of driving out the dark clouds of ignorance, and creating the clear, bright light of knowledge?

We should answer these questions by reading what Diderot himself wrote about this image:

> You can see at the top Truth between Reason and Imagination: Reason tries to pull away the veil from Truth, and Imagination gets ready to make Truth beautiful. Below this group is a crowd of speculative *philosophes*, and below them a group of artists. The *philosophes* have their eyes fixed on Truth; proud

continued

continued

Metaphysics does not look directly at Truth. Theology turns its back on Truth and waits for light from above.

Denis Diderot, *Salon of 1765*, translation by Michael Adcock

Questions

1. What do the three main figures represent?
2. What, according to Diderot, do the *philosophes* mainly study?
3. What is Diderot's criticism of the old-fashioned philosophers who continued to study abstract theories ('metaphysics')?
4. What is Diderot's opinion of religious thinking ('theology')?
5. What does bright light represent in this image of the intellectual movement?
6. Historians regard all forms of expression from the past as sources that can be 'read' to tell us something about the time we are studying. Write a paragraph, summing up in your own words the origin of this visual source and what purpose Diderot intended it to fulfil. Explain the context (historical setting) of this image, and analyse why Diderot felt that he was fighting a sort of intellectual battle for Truth.

peter gay

The German-American writer Peter Gay (born 1923) is a leading historian of the Enlightenment. His key works are *The Party of Humanity: Essays in the French Enlightenment* (1964) and *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation: The Rise of Modern Paganism* (1966). As his titles suggest, he sees the Enlightenment as an early changes happening at the example of the liberal and humanistic tradition of the modern Western world. same time?

Gay writes:

> The Enlightenment was a great revolution in man's style of thinking that came to dominate the Western world in the eighteenth century. It was composed of the interplay between ideas and events, inventions and expectations; its raw materials were the triumph of Newtonian science, striking improvements in industrial and agricultural techniques, a widespread loss of religious fervor and a corresponding rise of 'reasonable' religion, an even bolder play of the critical spirit among the older mysteries of Church and state which had for centuries escaped criticism, a new sense of confidence in man's power over his worldly destiny.
>
> Peter Gay, quoted in Charles Vann Woodward, *A Comparative Approach to American History* (Washington: Voice of America Forum Lectures, 1968), p. 37

questions

1 According to Gay, why must the Enlightenment be seen as a number of important changes happening at the same time?

2 What was the most important set of scientific ideas that inspired the Enlightenment?

3 What sorts of technological change and invention helped contribute to this revolution in human thinking?

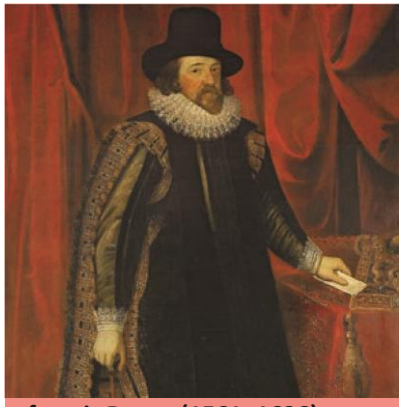
4 What were two forms of traditional authority that were challenged and questioned during the Enlightenment?

5 How did people's view of their position in the world

change as a result of the Enlightenment?

origins of the enlightenment

In what is known as the 'scientific revolution', a number of brilliant scientific thinkers in the 17th century created the key ideas and words that the *philosophes* would use to explore their own ideas in the 18th century. Like the Enlightenment, the period of this 'scientific revolution' is difficult to define precisely. It was a period during which thinkers began to reexamine understandings of the natural world. Using observation, empiricism and the application of



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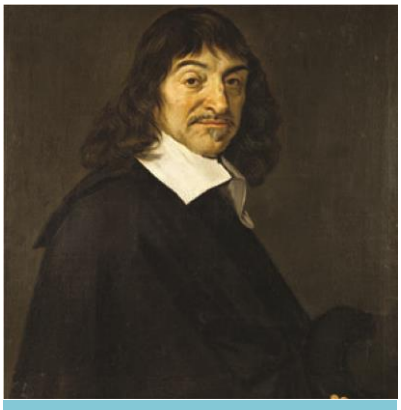
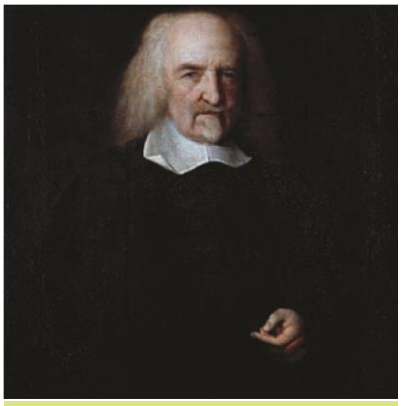
francis Bacon (1561–1626)
Francis Bacon was a pioneer of a great revolution in human thought that involved thinking about the very act of thinking. His 'natural philosophy' was the beginning of modern scientific method. In the course of his only actual experiment, he investigated whether he could preserve a dead chicken by stuffing it with snow. His experiment worked, the chicken was preserved, but Bacon caught a bad cold and died.



GettyImages/Imagno

rené descartes (1596–1650)
René Descartes tried to understand understanding itself. His famous statement 'I think therefore I am' suggested that we must base our conclusions upon what we know to be true. When Descartes asked whether we humans really exist, he considered that if he was wondering about existence, then he must exist in order to be here to wonder about it. From this, Descartes concluded that we know that the whole world exists, and even that God exists.



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thomas hobbes (1588–1679)
Thomas Hobbes' theories were so radical that they terrified authorities – they blamed him for angering God, and believed that God sent the Great Fire of London to punish the English for Hobbes' work. Hobbes applied reason to the rational analysis of how political power began. In his masterpiece, *Leviathan* (1651), he probed beyond the traditional mystique of kings and princes, and asked why people originally gave up their own freedom in order to obey a ruler. He concluded that they did so in order to be ruled by a king who would keep the peace and guarantee security.

pierre Bayle (1647–1706)
Pierre Bayle contributed to the 17th-century 'knowledge revolution' by insisting that the only true knowledge comes from the actual study of reality, not from theoretical speculation. He insisted that we cannot accept knowledge as true just because people say it is.

mathematical principals to the world they observed, they laid the foundations for modern sciences, such as physics and chemistry. Like the later Enlightenment *philosophes*, they rejected traditional and religious explanations. The methods used by these 'scientific revolutionaries' would be adapted by the *philosophes* to a broader range of topics and questions such as 'how is society organised?'. The individuals detailed below are only a small selection of the key figures of the scientific revolution.

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John locke (1632–1704)
John Locke was, with Newton, the leading thinker to whom the *philosophes* looked for their ideas. He is particularly known for his pioneering work about the nature of human understanding. Locke argued that human intelligence, and the use of reason, allows humans to understand the natural world, as well as human nature, and to improve it. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), he explained that people can observe the natural world, take in what they see, and analyse it. The world is not a mystery understood only by the God who created it; the world runs according to certain rules and truths and, once we understand them, we can discover truth. Therefore, we do not have to accept the world as it is; we can change it for the better.

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Isaac newton (1642–1727)
Isaac Newton's investigation of the physical world and of mathematical principles provided crucial ideas for all Enlightenment thought. In his *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* (1687), he used strict reasoning and mathematical principles to prove that the whole universe operates according to a set of 'natural' laws. Since these laws exist, intelligent humans can discover them. He suggested that the world, and nature, were like a gigantic machine created by God, who set it in motion and allowed to run. Human beings did not need priests, the Bible or old-fashioned philosophical debate to understand this 'machine' of nature; they just had to study the machine itself, observe how it works, and analyse what they see.

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Baruch spinoza (1632–77)
Baruch Spinoza's *Ethics* covered a broad range of philosophical and moral problems. He suggested that we should not focus on our personal problems, but see them in the broader context of everything that exists – we need to learn to 'look at our own lives through the eyes of eternity' to get a true perspective on things. Spinoza also wrote: 'The highest activity a human being can attain is learning for understanding, because to understand is to be free.' He further commented:
'The true aim of government is liberty.'

What were the big ideas of the Enlightenment?

During the Enlightenment, thinkers, writers, scientists and artists continued the 17th-century 'scientific revolution', re-examining all existing knowledge to create a new system for understanding the world. We now accept scientific investigation as the most reliable way of discovering and understanding the world, but this was not always so. People traditionally accepted what the Church told them; it would take a 'revolution in the mind' before they would dare to even think they could discover information for themselves.

The Enlightenment challenged existing authority and questioned the information that those in authority had traditionally given. For example, kings had for centuries claimed to rule by 'divine right', meaning that God had placed them in power. For generations, people never dared question this explanation. Enlightenment thinkers, by contrast, challenged the idea of divine right, asking how you could prove that God had put a king on the throne. John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau even suggested that humans only choose to be ruled because they gain some benefit from having a leader, and so a king should only remain on this throne while he ruled for his people's benefit.

The Enlightenment questioned everything. Its 'knowledge revolution' was based on the idea that we can understand human beings, countries, the natural world, the earth and even the universe simply by careful observation and rational thinking. Previously, religious authorities, such as the Catholic Church, had explained the world in terms of miracles, mysteries, visions and other religious beliefs. Now, the Enlightenment thinkers rejected any knowledge that could not be proven. This meant that they increasingly rejected the authority of the Church, and the 'knowledge' about the world it provided people. This process of rejecting religious-based knowledge, known as **secularisation**, is a key feature of Enlightenment thought.

secularisation The process of removing religious influence and control from a society

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sourCe 1.6 *The Philosophers at Supper*, c. 1775, by Jean Huber (1721-86). This artwork gives us a good idea of the nature of the *philosophes*. They thrived on informal, sociable discussion – rather like that which takes place at a good dinner party – and never became a single, organised ideology or a formal political party.

a glorIous feast of Ideas

The Enlightenment was an important intellectual movement, but it did not produce one single ideology, or system of ideas. It was driven by many thinkers across the world, who were free to think as they wished. They disagreed with each other, and sometimes quarrelled savagely. They also contradicted themselves within their own work, often writing one idea in one book then its opposite in the next. This was a time when men and women were examining hundreds of new ideas, and they felt no need to force these ideas into one standardised system of thought. If Europe had become a vast living room for discussion, then the Enlightenment was like a vast dinner table loaded with a feast of ideas. The image *The Philosophers at Supper* in Source 1.6 shows a group of thinkers dining together, with the ideas flowing across the table being far more important to them than the food itself. And, like any good dinner party, this gathering of thinkers does not hold a single set of beliefs.

the BIg Ideas of the enlIghtenMent

natural rights are enjoyed by all human beings no matter who they are The Constitution of France not only establishes how the political system works, but also guarantees people's rights by law. The *philosophes* believed that rights were universal, applying equally to all people, regardless of their birth or position, and inalienable, meaning that they could not be taken away. In the two major revolutions late in the 18th century (French and American), the first important French document was called the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (August 1789), while the American Declaration of Independence (1776) also contained a firm statement of the 'natural, inalienable and sacred rights of man'.

progress and the debate on optimism In the 18th century, 'progress' meant the use of human reason, science and a sense of humanity to improve human beings and society in order to create wellbeing and happiness for all. Some *philosophes* were optimists, who believed in the idea of progress: human beings could use their intelligence to improve their world until it was perfect.

human nature
The *philosophes* believed human nature was good. Voltaire claimed that 'man is not born ill, but becomes ill when he is treated badly'; that is, by bad government, bad education or bad social customs.

understanding God. John Locke supported this belief, and in turn influenced the French *philosophes*. Many people in the late 18th and early 19th centuries believed that people could communicate with God directly by going out into the wilds of nature.

the big ideas of the enlightenment
Once we have understood that Enlightenment ideas are not a unified system of thought, we can appreciate that they did tend to go in one broad general direction. Contemporaries referred to Enlightenment ideas as 'the *new* philosophy' (*la nouvelle philosophie*), indicating that *they* certainly felt the ideas were new, and added up to an overall philosophy about life.

empiricism: the skill of scientific observation For the *philosophes*, experiments and

education can transform humanity
Because of the theories of John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, parents came to understand that a child's mind was a 'blank slate' onto which a good education could write ideas.

deism: the direct worship of god
The key belief of the Enlightenment thinkers was that reason tells us that God must exist. The second belief, which was controversial, was that all other aspects of religion – such as religious books, miracles, visions, revelations and even prayer in a church – are useless for

observations were the only way to discover the truth, and were the basis of empirical learning based on reality. For example, the *philosophes* would analyse how a horse moves, because they had seen a horse in reality, but would never analyse how an angel flies, because they had (presumably) never observed one. Denis Diderot boasted that his generation worked only by scientific methods.

scepticism: the skill of questioning all accepted knowledge The *philosophes* argued that we cannot accept traditional knowledge provided by any authority, such as the Church or the universities. They insisted that we should believe nothing we are told, and check everything afresh as if for the first time.

reason: the skill of using human intelligence to solve problems Reason, and reasoning, are the process of exploring issues by relying on logical thought and hard evidence. The *philosophes* believed we should use our intelligence to improve the society in which we live. Denis Diderot wrote: 'Reason is to Philosophy what Grace is to the Christian. Grace determines how a Christian acts; Reason determines how a philosopher acts.'

nature Previously, people thought that Nature was a mystery understood only by the God who had created it. Now, they felt that the laws of the natural world had been or could be unlocked. People accepted Newton's idea of a 'watchmaker God', a supreme intelligence that designed Nature with the fine precision of some perfect watch, then set it in motion, creating the world we see around us.

rJ WhIte and the Idea of the antI-phIlosophers

Historian RJ White has called the *philosophes* 'anti-philosophers'. He meant that the *philosophes* defined their new, practical spirit by contrast to earlier philosophers. Traditional philosophers specialised in abstract, theoretical discussions of ideas far from the real world and ordinary people. White insisted that the *philosophes* were united by their commitment to using reason, exercising humanity, rejecting superstition and intolerance, and trying to create a better world:

> The *philosophes* … are distinctive only because of their community in opposition to the **old regime**, their wholly **irreverent** temper, their contempt or neglect of the faith and intellect of their forefathers, of all that was old and long-established … The positive **tenets** of the *philosophes* were less **unanimously** held but … may be summarised as devotion to liberality and toleration. They believed … 'that human nature is good, that the world is capable of being made a desirable abiding palace, and that the evil of the world is the fruit of bad education and bad institutions. [They] were never a party, a school, a single movement. Perhaps it would be best to say that the *philosophes* were united only in the fact that they shared a … certain common mental aspect.
>
> RJ White, *The Anti-philosophers*, Macmillan, London 1970, pp. 4–5

From ideas to action

To understand the Enlightenment properly, we must first understand the special meaning of the word 'philosophy'. The Enlightenment thinkers described their movement as *la philosophie*, and themselves as *philosophes*. We do not translate this latter word into English ('philosopher'), because these thinkers saw themselves as completely different to the traditional philosophers who had gone before them. Most *philosophes* were not professional philosophers or university teachers; they were simply ordinary citizens concerned about society, who believed that the world could be improved by the use of human reason and science.

These *philosophes* criticised previous thinkers for being too theoretical and abstract. The *philosophes* disliked general philosophical,

religious or metaphysical speculation, and argued that there were so many practical problems here on earth that the best use of human reason

old regime

The royal government in France before the French Revolution

irreverent

Having little respect for authority or religion

tenets

Beliefs

unanimously

Collectively agreeing on one point or idea

---

was to find way to improve real life for ordinary people. Today, we would call them 'engaged intellectuals' addressing the political and social problems of their times. The *philosophes* were committed to improving the wellbeing of ordinary people, hence Peter Gay's description of them as the 'party of humanity'.

We can see the *philosophes* putting their ideas to practical use in three great campaigns to improve the wellbeing of ordinary people:

+ using science to improve human life
+ using art to promote social usefulness
+ using reason to defeat religious intolerance.

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sourCe 1.10 *Voltaire at Ferney*, engraved by Prevost, (18th century). Most *philosophes* believed that science could improve life for ordinary people. Voltaire transformed the miserable village of Ferney into a wealthy small town with good agricultural practices and its own industries.

usIng sCIenCe to IMproVe huMan lIfe

First, the *philosophes* wanted to prove that science could improve human life. Voltaire, for example, devoted the last 20 years of his life to demonstrating how science could transform a small, miserable village into a wealthy community. He purchased an estate at Ferney, France, in 1759, and the backward village of about 40 poor people became his own scientific experiment:

+ He improved living conditions in the village by building new houses, a church and a theatre.
+ He improved farming practices by introducing new techniques for breeding strong animals.
+ He used the new science of hydrology to drain swamps.
+ He planted trees, and introduced new machines to sow seed efficiently.
+ He used the information from *The Encyclopaedia* to set up new industries, from tanneries to potteries, from watchmaking to silk production.

Within two decades, the miserable village had become a wealthy little town of some 1200 people, with few living in poverty.

usIng art to proMote soCIal usefulness

The second great campaign was to promote the idea of social usefulness; that is, that every adult person should do productive work. As modern Australians, we accept this as perfectly natural. It is difficult to imagine an older world in which people who were wealthy, but did not work, were the most respected; and those who did productive work were seen as inferior. Before the Enlightenment, few dared to criticise the aristocracy for doing no work, or the clergy for retiring to monasteries or nunneries. The *philosophes* suggested that even humble artisans in workshops or peasants in fields have greater dignity and social importance than those who do nothing.

using reason to defeat religious intoleranCe

The third great Enlightenment campaign was the attack on religious intolerance. The Catholic Church was the one official religion in France, and used its power over the government to ensure that people of other religions were disadvantaged. Jews and Protestants were denied legal status,

New social ideas reflected in art

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sourCe 1.11 *Marquis de Sourches and his Family*, 1750, by François-Hubert Drouais (1727–75), Château de Versailles, France

WikimediaCommons

sourCe 1.12 *The Kitchen Maid*, 1738, by Jean Siméon Chardin (1699–1779)

If we look carefully, we can see signs of changing social attitudes in art. Many paintings record ideas that were radical and new at the time. Look at Sources 1.11 and 1.12.

source 1.11: *Marquis de Sourches and his Family*

François-Hubert Drouais devoted his career to painting wealthy aristocrats enjoying their cultivated, idle way of life. He sold hundreds of paintings, mainly to aristocrats and wealthy bourgeois who loved to see their pleasantly lazy way of life reflected in pictures.

Questions

1. In this painting by Drouais, what are the aristocrats actually doing with their time?
2. How do we know that these aristocrats spent a great deal of money on fashion and expensive luxuries?
3. Look carefully at the colours that Drouais has used. How do the colours of the painting create a sense of refinement and luxury?

source 1.12: *The Kitchen Maid*

Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin painted in France from the 1720s to the 1770s, devoting his career to genre scenes, or scenes of everyday life. Some showed simple, dignified scenes of middle-class life, while others showed working people, such as servant women. These scenes of humble working life appealed strongly to *philosophes* such as Diderot, who wrote reviews of the annual art exhibitions in Paris.

continued

continued

Questions

1. In Chardin's painting, what sorts of work might have been done by the woman shown in the kitchen?
2. How do we know from her costume that this woman is a humble worker?
3. Look carefully at Chardin's colours. What are the main colours in the painting? What sort of feeling do they create? How do they compare with the colours used by Drouais?
4. What do you think was the painter's attitude to this woman? Does his painting express a sense of liking and respect, or does it express a dislike of common working people? If possible, try to identify what elements of the painting make you think this.

and suffered serious discrimination in terms of legal rights and employment. Indeed, they could not even register their names when they were born, so legally they did not even 'exist'. For some time, nobody questioned this injustice. The *philosophes*, however, believed that Catholicism should not be the only valid form of religion.

A shocking example of religious intolerance: the Calas Affair (1762)

Philosophes such as Voltaire drew attention to the seriousness of the victimisation of religious groups in France. The most shocking example was of Jean Calas, an honest Protestant shopkeeper in the city of Toulouse. His son, Marc-Antoine, suffered depression when, after becoming a lawyer, he could not get a job because of his religion, and committed suicide. Rumours, however, falsely claimed that his father killed him because he intended to convert to Catholicism. Jean Calas was arrested in 1762, tried, and sentenced to death by torture. His execution was barbaric. First, his limbs were dislocated. He was then force-fed water, until his body swelled to bursting point. His torturer then smashed his arms and legs, and left him attached to a pole to die. Through all of this, Calas continued to insist that he was innocent. Later, when his executioners found him

akg-images/ErichLessing

sourCe 1.13 *La Malheureuse Famille Calas (The Unfortunate Calas Family)*, 1764, by Louis Carrogis de Carmontelle (1717–1806), Musee de Louvre.

As well as defending Calas,

Voltaire also tried to assist his family. This watercolour shows the family being told that Calas' conviction has been overturned.

still alive, they mercy-killed him by strangling him.

Voltaire rightly saw this as a terrible example of the power of intolerance to commit injustice and devastate an honest family. He wrote:

> "It seems to me that it is in everybody's interest to look further into this affair which, however you look at it, is the height of fanaticism – 'intolerance' is better. Ignoring such a thing is to abandon humanity."

He took up the issue in 1762, publishing his *Treatise on Tolerance* the following year.

Voltaire roused public attention, and in 1764 King Louis XV met the Calas family and overturned the court's findings. He dismissed the chief judge of Toulouse, ordering him to pay compensation of 36 000 francs to the family.

revocation
The withdrawal or cancellation of a law

lay oligarchies
Power structures of a non-religious nature

clerical oligarchies
Power structures of a religious nature

Margaret C. JaCoB and the Idea of a 'radICal enlIghtenMent'

In this section, we have examined some key Enlightenment ideas. While we should not think that they all sat naturally and easily together as one, unified intellectual movement, the ideas described are the 'traditional' range of Enlightenment thought. These ideas were already very radical in 18th-century Europe, but in recent years historians have proposed that the Enlightenment contained even more shockingly radical ideas.

Historians always question what we know – or think we know – and challenge us to rethink. One great 'rethinker' is Margaret C. Jacob (born 1943), who since the early 1980s has proposed that one part of the Enlightenment was far more radical than we suspected.

First, Jacob shifted the focus away from France – where the *philosophes* attacked the authority of the monarchy and the Catholic Church – and identified much more radical thinkers elsewhere, particularly in the Dutch Republic. She believed that: 'three quite diverse national settings (England, France and the Dutch Republic) mixed to create "the perfect storm" ':

> After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes [which in 1598 had granted substantial rights to Protestants] in 1685, thousands of exiled French Protestants fled to the Dutch Republic and England … and they carried with them experiences of persecution vivid and shocking to the modern imagination … The Dutch Republic offered an unprecedented set of advantages to immigrants and refugees. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries more than 1.5 million people flocked to its western seaboard towns. More than a million emigrated from foreign lands. The influx produced social, cultural, linguistic and especially religious diversity of a sort never before seen in Europe.
>
> Margaret C. Jacob, 'The Nature of Early Eighteenth-century Religious Radicalism', in *Republics of Letters*, no. 1, May 2009, p. 1.

Jacob discovered a much more political and radical *philosophe* than we are familiar with:

> The radicals were intellectual dissenters, men, and possibly a very few women, often with a refugee background, who could not share the willingness of the major *philosophes* like Voltaire and d'Alembert … to put their faith in enlightened monarchy. They sought through … propaganda as well as intrigue, to establish a republican ideal.
>
> Margaret C. Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (London, Boston:

continued

Allen & Unwin, 1981), p. 20

Second, Jacob pointed out that the 'Radical Enlightenment' began as a criticism of royal rule and of religious intolerance, but soon exploded into a movement for real revolutionary change:

> What had begun in the 1680s as a movement against religious intolerance and arbitrary rule had become by the 1780s an agenda for reform, threatening courts, princes, and lay and clerical oligarchies. The movement towards the light contributed in complex ways to the late eighteenth-century revolutions. The American patriots Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams also should be seen as *philosophes*. Their ideas led to independence from Britain and the creation of the American republic. More fundamental changes would be necessary in Europe. In Amsterdam in 1787, Brussels in 1788, and Paris in the summer of 1789, the very structure of government and society was attacked, and violence erupted … The Enlightenment was one factor in the birth of modern democratic and representative politics.
>
> Margaret C Jacob, *The Enlightenment. A Brief History with Documents*, Bedford/St Martin's, Boston, 2001, p. 3

continued

How did the Enlightenment spread so quickly and widely?

It is tempting, when discussing an ideas-based movement such as the Enlightenment, to focus only on key writers and their works. We certainly need to know who wrote the important works and what ideas they contained, but we also need to go further, and understand how these ideas spread so quickly and so broadly. Writers might publish books full of new ideas, but we cannot assume that they will automatically spread through society: the books must be read by people, discussed, reviewed, questioned and debated. The real history of new ideas only begins when they spread from person to person with amazing speed, or 'go viral', as we say nowadays.

In our own time, we are so used to electronic media providing communication with possibly thousands of people across the world in a few seconds that it is difficult to imagine how people exchanged ideas so intensively when the main forms of communication were simply conversation, letter writing and printed information. And yet to really understand the Enlightenment, we need to see this as a time when the air seemed electrified with a massive flow of new ideas; with conversations that had never occurred before.

Put simply, the ideas of the Enlightenment spread because people at the time learnt the skill of networking; of creating communication links with other people, spanning Europe and finally much of the world. Historian Dorinda Outram stresses that we must understand how many networks there were, and how crucial they were to the spread of new ideas:

> Many writers point to the establishment, all over Europe, of new institutions and organisations where ideas could be explored and discussed. Some of these institutions, like masonic lodges, learned academies and societies, were formal affairs, whose membership was carefully controlled. Others like public lectures, coffee houses, lending libraries, art exhibitions, operatic and theatrical performances, were nearly all commercial operations, open to all those who could pay, and thus provided ways in which many different social [groups] could be exposed to the same ideas.

Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005), p. 12

a 'republic of letters'

One important cause of the Europe-wide explosion of discussion was that thinkers believed that they formed a special brotherhood within their respective societies, with a mission to keep the flow of information, criticism, research and debate going. They imagined they were citizens of an imaginary country, or 'republic', which existed across and within all European countries, and ultimately even further. This 'republic of letters' existed in all verbal and printed forms of debate. In 1780, one writer explained that its members 'form a species by their own merit, and gain a reputation as brilliant as that of the great powers on earth':

European countries had had talented writers for centuries, but previously they produced works for the pleasure of the wealthy classes. In 18th-century Europe, these writers redefined themselves as professionals who were entrusted to guide independent critical thought. They wrote letters across Europe, visited foreign countries and sent each other books, always fuelling the fires of passionate debate.

the Birth of public opinion

The second major change in 18th-century Europe was what historians call the 'birth of public opinion'. As modern Australians, we just accept that public opinion surrounds us in television news, newspapers, discussions, debates, petitions and demonstrations. Citizens are responsible for keeping themselves informed about matters of national interest. It is difficult to imagine a time when educated European had little chance to discuss national affairs because they were kept unaware of them. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the business of government happened behind closed doors, and any problems or crises were kept secret.

During the 18th century, people in countries such as France turned their attention to national affairs, identifying problems and suggesting solutions. This was the first generation to feel the power of public debate: by simply starting to talk about national problems, people give themselves the knowledge and power to make change. French Finance Minister Jacques Necker (1732–1804) claimed that public opinion 'was an invisible power without money, without police, without an army'. Through the debates of public opinion, people discovered new ideas and words for critical thought.

sourCe 1.14 *The News Readers*, artist unknown. This engraving shows a group of citizens discussing the latest newspapers and journals. Crowding together, they eagerly read the latest news. This interest in current affairs was new in the 18th century, and meant there was a new audience for radical ideas, criticisms and suggestions for reform.

Coffee houses and Chatter

New ideas and discussion need new venues. Enlightenment discussion was assisted by the birth of an exciting new place: the coffee house, or café. Coffee was the novelty of 18th-century Paris, Vienna, Berlin and other cities, and 'coffee houses' sprang up across Europe. Contemporaries noted that, while alcohol stops conversation, coffee improves thinking and expression.

Coffee houses became places of discussion and, inevitably, radical political debate. The café owners noticed that people came as much to talk as to drink, and provided the latest books, journals, newspapers and pamphlets for any customer who paid for a drink. The café became an informal library and discussion group combined.

TheMetropolitanMuseumofArt

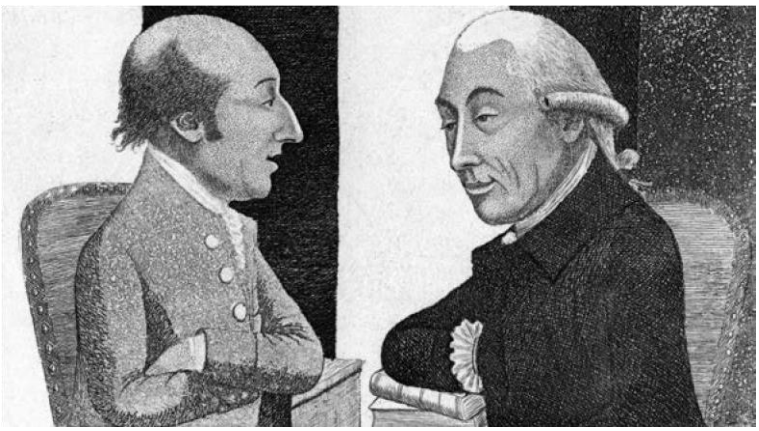
WellcomeLibrary,London

sourCe 1.15 *The Newsmongers*, 1752 by Gabriel de Saint-Aubin In this apparently relaxed café scene, much serious discussion is happening. Today, some people contemptuously refer to intellectuals as 'the chattering classes', but this was no mere chatter. Historians know that revolutionary changes begin when people gather and talk seriously about the state of the nation. This 'birth of public opinion' – and 'public chatter' – was an important factor leading up to the French Revolution of 1789, the Russian Revolution of 1917 and, in our own time, in the movement for change in contemporary China.

sourCe 1.16 *The Philosophes at the Café Procope*, artist unknown. The *philosophes* gathered in establishments like the Café Procope in Paris. Voltaire, for example, habitually drank 30 cups of coffee laced with chocolate there every day. The caption – 'Our cradle was the coffee house' – stresses that the Enlightenment's birthplace was not academia, but the humble café.

aCadeMIes and learned soCIetIes

Enlightenment thinkers also founded academies to further develop science and knowledge. These were established with royal permission, and had constitutions governing their conduct. They were not open to everybody, requiring an annual fee to ensure that only wealthy people – local nobles, high government officials, wealthy merchants and traders, and rich professionals such as doctors – could join. The academies had meeting rooms, well-stocked libraries and the means to publish papers on scientific issues. They could afford essay competitions with cash prizes. Historian Daniel Roche notes that in 1784 the academy in the provincial French town of Metz advertised an essay competition on the question of the death penalty, and inspired an intense public debate on the issue. The competition prompted a young lawyer from Arras, Maximilien Robespierre, to contribute an impassioned essay attacking the practice of execution. The winning essay was reprinted many times, keeping the debate alive for some years. For Dorinda Outram, this is evidence that these organisations shaped and sharpened public opinion.



MaryEvansPictureLibrary

sourCe 1.17 The great economist Adam Smith joined with his friends, the geologist James Hutton and the chemist Joseph Black (both pictured in this 1787 etching by John Kay), to found the Oyster Club in Edinburgh. This 'dining society' provided another form of socialising and intellectual discussion.

The importance of learned societies

A related form of networking was created when professionals and merchants formed social groups devoted to learning. In Manchester, such people formed the Literary and Philosophical Society (1785), where educated people met and discussed the latest scientific discoveries. In Birmingham, a similar group formed the Lunar Society in the late 1750s. Some of its members were inventors, such as Richard Arkwright, industrialists, such as Josiah Wedgewood, or intellectuals, such as Erasmus Darwin. We have already seen them at work, gathered intently around the experiment with oxygen shown in the painting by Joseph Wright of Derby (also a passionate member of the group) on the opening page of this chapter.

the salons

The greatest powerhouse for Enlightenment discussion – the traditional 'salon' – already existed, but adapted to this new wave of serious discussion. Since the 17th century, wealthy bourgeois and noble women had held social gatherings featuring elegant conversation and good manners. At first, discussion focused on literature and art and, if it mentioned society, it usually made fun of those who did not fit into this social world. In the 18th century this changed, and some salons hosted people

who criticised their own society, notably the political system of absolute monarchy and the institution of the Catholic Church. In this venue, women became crucial directors of enlightened debate.

dena goodman and the feminist Viewpoint

One great feminist historian who has improved our understanding of the Enlightenment is Dena Goodman (1952–), who wrote *The Republic of Letters. A Cultural History of the Enlightenment* in 1994. She argues (at pp. 2–3): 'A cultural history of the French Enlightenment must also be a feminist history, because it challenges the [idea] of intellectual activity as the product of masculine reason and male genius'.

Goodman recognises men's great ideas and works, but seeks to balance the picture by proving how important women were.

Goodman believes that we usually study 'the public sphere' – public life and affairs – where men usually dominate. Feminists look instead at the 'private sphere' – private life, the home, social gatherings and conversations. Goodman correctly argues that we should not study the great ideas alone, but also the setting in which they spread. The

Enlightenment succeeded partly because women provided the venues in which ideas developed. Women transformed the 'salons' to create the custom of intelligent people gathering to discuss art, literature, music, philosophy, science and politics. Goodman calls this 'intellectual sociability'.

continued

Goodman's valuable work clarifies how important women were to the discussions that fuelled the Enlightenment. Others, however, disagree with her conclusions, and warn that the total number of women involved in the Enlightenment was relatively small, and that the women of the salons were, after all, merely conducting conversations. Historian Jonathan Israel (1946–), for example, argued in 2012 that the contribution of the Paris salons was 'practically zero'.

Madame Geoffrin and her salon

The Enlightenment was a process of lively discussion and free exchange of thoughts. Women provided a setting where this exchange occurred, and guided the discussions. Instead of setting up a university or an academy, they created hundreds of gatherings in Paris, in French towns and finally in other European cities. In the days before the Internet and Facebook, they created the first social networking, which was carried out through conversations and by the exchange of thousands of letters. The three leaders in this field were Madame Geoffrin, Mademoiselle Julie de Lespinasse and Madame Suzanne Necker.

Madame Marie Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin (1699–1777) was the greatest hostess of all, with a mastery of salon conversation. From 1750 until 1777, her salon was the focus of key Enlightenment thinkers. Women across France copied her. Her achievement is impressive because, being female, she was denied the formal education that boys in rich families received. She therefore had to learn from her visitors – who included great thinkers such as Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle and Montesquieu – and rapidly proved her intelligence.

Dena Goodman argues that Geoffrin created the Enlightenment salon. Geoffrin changed the usual way of running the salon to allow longer discussion time. She set fixed days for her salon: artists were invited on Mondays, and writers on Wednesdays. She changed the main meal from dinner to lunch, so that people could spend the afternoon discussing.

The salon women created a new institution: a lounge-room 'republic' in which people could exchange and test ideas freely, but according to certain rules. Thus, these women were more than hostesses; they were 'governors'. Men could attend if they obeyed the rules of the 'governors'. Geoffrin enforced the rules of polite conversation because she practised them, setting such a courteous tone that her guests had to behave accordingly. She was expert in conducting intellectual discussion. Geoffrin was also in contact with the international community, including Catherine the Great of Russia and King Stanislaw August of Poland.

The salon as a machine for rational discussion

Examine Source 1.18, which is an annotated version of *Reading of the Tragedy 'L'Orphelin de la Chine' in the Salon of Madame Geoffrin* by Anicet-Charles Gabriel Lemonnier, also shown on the opening page of this chapter. Then answer the questions that follow.

continued

continued

Jean-Jacques Rousseau began as a friend and associate of the *philosophes*, but soon broke with them.

This sculpture tells us more about these people's ideals. It is a bust of Voltaire, and its presence suggests great respect for his enlightened ideas.

These two paintings show landscapes. Many of the people present would have been influenced by Rousseau to see the countryside as a place of peace and beauty.

The paintings on this wall show scenes from ancient history, and are painted in the neo-classical style.

Mademoiselle Julie de Lespinasse was another leading salon hostess. She was first introduced into intellectual circles in the salon of her friend Madame du Deffand. Later, she established her own salon, and attracted great thinkers such as d'Alembert. She became famous for her gracious manner and for her ability to conduct intellectual discussions in her salon.

This painting tells us a great deal about these people's values. This painting is Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin's *The Return from the Market*, 1739. Diderot praised Chardin's sympathetic and respectful representation of good, simple people.

The Comte de Buffon was a famous naturalist.

Madame Geoffrin was a wealthy woman of the bourgeoisie. She was the hostess of this salon. Although the person shown reading to the group is a man, and most of the other visitors are also male, it was women who conducted, guided and controlled the conversations happening in the salons.

The actor **Le Kain** is shown in the process of reading Voltaire's play *The Orphan of China* (1755) out loud to the salon. The play was performed in Paris in 1755, with exotic sets and costumes to recreate the 'Chinese' style. Le Kain played Ghengis Khan.

Montesquieu was the author of the influential political work, *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748).

Jean le Rond d'Alembert was the co-editor with Diderot of *The Encyclopaedia*.

Denis Diderot was a complex thinker who drove the great project of *The Encyclopaedia*.

Fontenelle was famous for his *History of Oracles* (1687). He was an elderly gentleman at the time this painting depicts, but in his 90s was still expressing appreciation of beautiful young women, saying wistfully: 'He wished he was 80 again.'

continued

SOURCE 1.18 *Reading of the Tragedy 'L'Orphelin de la Chine' in the Salon of Madame Geoffrin*, 1812, by Anicet-Charles Lemonnier (1743–1824)

continued

Questions

1. What were the usual topics of discussion in a typical salon?
2. Judging from their dress and behaviour, was a salon a formal or an informal gathering?
3. From what you have read, on what day of the week would this gathering be taking place?
4. How do the works of art in the room provide clues about the values and ideals of Madame Geoffrin's friends?
5. How did Madame Geoffrin change the traditional salon to create the 'Enlightenment salon'?

the freeMasons

One crucially important Enlightenment network – Freemasonry – may not seem to be a significant one to the modern observer. Freemasonry still exists in our own time, but 18th-century Freemason societies were vastly more popular and influential than they are today.

Freemasonry combines a commitment to good deeds with its own secret, mystical religious ceremonies. It resembles Enlightenment thought because it believes in the **humanitarian** and in **reason**. In the 18th century, Freemasons also hoped to improve society morally without using traditional religions such as Catholicism. In France, England and in Europe generally, Freemasonry attracted large numbers of educated people – and some 'lodges' (groups) were open to women as well as men – who committed themselves to improving the world around them. Even emperors joined, including Frederick the Great of Prussia.

humanitarian
Person who helps other human beings in difficulty

reason
The rational application of human intelligence to solving problems

The Masonic lodges provided another network for spreading ideas, inventions, theories and debate across Europe. Naturally, they faced strong opposition. In France, the Catholic Church feared the Freemasons' rejection of established religions; while in the German states, rulers felt threatened, fearing that the Freemasons might be plotting to overthrow the government.

How did the philosophes *spread their ideas?*

We have seen that the ideas of the Enlightenment spread quickly and widely because the *philosophes* developed social and intellectual networks so successfully that they communicated their ideas around most of the known world.

We have also noted that the process of communication was very different in the 18th century compared with our own time. In modern Australia, the communication of ideas is almost limitless because of the vast size of the Internet and the impact of social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook. People today can conduct their social life almost completely through electronic media, to the extent that coming generations may never need to handle a book or use a telephone. Those wanting to challenge their own society today – like the young people seeking revolutionary change in Egypt, Libya and Syria – can do so simply by using

mobile telephones. The 'Arab Spring' of the early 21st century proved that revolutions of the mind and in political systems can now happen by instantaneous electronic communication.

Had the *philosophes* been alive today, they would have loved electronic communication for its power to spread ideas and create change. They had no such technology, but they invented their own powerful ways of spreading their ideas.

hoW dId the *philosophes* ConVInCe people?

As historians, we must investigate not only how these thinkers who created new ideas *communicated* them to people, but also how they *convinced* them.

The literary genius of the *philosophes*

These thinkers' secret weapon was their extraordinary talent for writing. To communicate their message, they wrote brilliantly in almost every form of literature known, and also invented completely new types of literary writing. Naturally, they wrote treatises and pamphlets, but they also wrote novels, short stories, a new form called the 'philosophical tale' (discussed below), dialogues (printed discussions) and speeches. Every type of writing was used to make a point.

Writing in a conversational style

Historian RJ White argues that most Enlightenment works were 'conversational'; that is, they were written in a style similar to the conversations then happening across Europe. The favourite form was called an '*entretien*' (dialogue or conversation), in which two speakers teased out an issue by discussing it. Another was the '*lettre*' (letter): a serious article speaking informally to the reader, as if in a personal letter. Yet another was the '*conte*' (story), which took a form similar to someone telling an amusing anecdote at a dinner party. Thus, people accustomed to discussing ideas in witty and educated conversations also read their favourite ideas in written works that used the same chatty tone.

Significant stories: the 'philosophical tale'

The *philosophes* were not just theorists; many were also excellent novelists. Voltaire was a brilliant fiction writer, and developed a special form of story – an apparently simple tale hiding deep philosophical meanings. He used these 'philosophical tales' to think through deep issues and to encourage people to reflect on them. For example, he was horrified by the human misery caused by nature in the Great Lisbon Earthquake of 1755. He was also struck by the pointlessness of conflicts such as the Seven Years' War (1756–63). He wrote a story, *Candide*, in which a young man travels the world observing such problems. Through his young hero, Voltaire reflects on the things that rob human beings of their happiness and wellbeing, and questions the belief that we are living in the best of all possible worlds.

akg-images/DeAgostiniPictureLibrary/GDagliOrti

sourCe 1.19 *Asker Khan Ambassador of Persia in 1808*, 1809, by Cesarine Henriette Flore Davin (1773–1844). The *philosophes* often put their radical criticisms in the mouths of imaginary foreigners. Montesquieu, for example, wrote in the voice of invented Persians visiting Paris.

Criticism through 'foreign eyes'

One of the *philosophes*' most powerful new ways of writing was the technique of writing a set of letters from a supposedly foreign point of view. This could work in a number of ways. In his *Persian Letters* (1721), Montesquieu claimed that he had 'found' some letters left by 'two Persians' who had travelled through France and recorded what they saw. He claimed that because he did not write them, he was not responsible for what the authors said. Montesquieu had actually written the letters himself, using his imaginary Persians to express his serious criticisms of French government and society.

Criticism through praise: the French admiration of England

Voltaire used another clever trick: writing a work that praised another nation for all the good things it had, but which were lacking in his own country. In his *Letters Concerning the English Nation* (1733), he presented himself as a foreigner visiting England and admiring its political freedom and religious tolerance. This literary trick allowed him to criticise France without seeming to do so: every time he praised the English political system, or the respect given to great thinkers such as John Locke and Isaac Newton, people automatically concluded that, by contrast, France did not have these same qualities.

Criticism through condemnation: talking about despotism in China

Another clever way to criticise your own government was to write – apparently innocently – about other countries that lacked a democratic system of representation. Many *philosophes* therefore wrote informative articles about China, marvelling at the fact that so many millions of people could be ruled by one emperor who demanded absolute obedience, but who never consulted them. How, they asked with mock innocence, could an emperor rule like a despot and take no notice of his people? Surely this is tyranny? Their comments really applied to France. Their readers understood this, but the police and the censors could not possibly object to these writings because they were supposedly about another country.

A new weapon of criticism: *The Encyclopaedia*

Of the many literary forms the *philosophes* used, one in particular was a bombshell. This form was usually known under the innocent name of a 'dictionary' or an 'encyclopaedia', but in reality it was far more than a simple reference book.

This powerful new form of Enlightenment expression occurred almost by accident. In 1745, the publisher and bookseller André Le Breton decided that France needed its own *Encyclopaedia*, like Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* in England. The *Cyclopaedia* mainly covered techniques such as mining, weaving or carpentry, in articles describing the processes involved, and with illustration pages showing the tools and skills used. In 1746, Le Breton asked Denis Diderot to simply translate the *Cyclopaedia* into French.

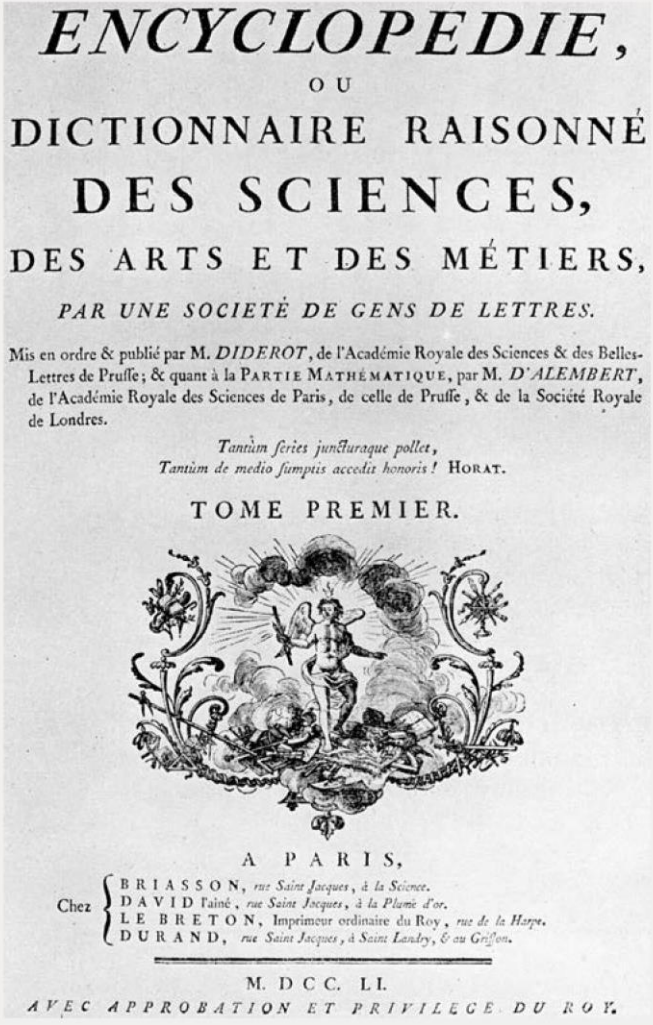
Diderot saw that he could make this publication more powerful than a straightforward description of current technology, and gathered together a team of thinkers to write original articles. He wanted a guide to every known technique to encourage progress and knowledge. Fired with enthusiasm, he asked Jean Le Rond d'Alembert to be his scientific advisor, and then recruited a team of experts on every subject imaginable. He himself worked with great intensity, writing articles, visiting workshops to check technical details and editing the articles by other authors. He continued this task after he was imprisoned at Vincennes

in 1749. In 1750 he advertised the first volume, and soon 2000 subscribers had paid in advance for the book. The volume appeared in 1751, causing great excitement in the intellectual circles of Paris.

The title page of *The Encyclopaedia*

The title page of the first edition of *The Encyclopaedia* is unusual because it contains so much information: this completely new form of publication had to be explained to its audience.

+ While it was commonly called *The Encyclopaedia*, the second title of the publication was *Reasoned Dictionary* [reason being a key aspect of the Enlightenment] *of Sciences, Arts and Trades*. Note that the second title lists only very practical subjects, and makes no mention of theoretical subjects such as theology, religion or metaphysics.
+ Underneath the two titles are the words 'By a Society of Men of Letters', reminding the readers that the Enlightenment was a massive process of discussion between thousands of people across Europe and the world.
+ Diderot's name is given as the editor. In some versions the title page adds proudly that Diderot was a 'Member of the Academy of Fine Arts and Sciences of Prussia', reminding the readers that he was taken seriously by the 'enlightened' Prussian ruler Frederick II, who by supporting a leading *philosophe* showed more intelligence than the King of France.
+ The four booksellers who supported the project are then listed.
+ Importantly, the page ends with the reassurance: '[published] with the approval and permission of the King'.



ENCYCLOPEDIE,

OU

DICTIONNAIRE RAISONNÉ

DES SCIENCES,

DES ARTS ET DES MÉTIERS,

PAR UNE SOCIETÉ DE GENS DE LETTRES.

Mis en ordre & publié par M. DIDEROT, de l'Académie Royale des Sciences & des Belles-Lettres de Prusse; & quant à la PARTIE MATHÉMATIQUE, par M. D'ALEMBERT, de l'Académie Royale des Sciences de Paris, de celle de Prusse, & de la Société Royale de Londres.

Tantùm series juncturaque pollet,
Tantùm de medio sumptis accedit honoris! HORAT.

TOME PREMIER.

A PARIS,

Chez BRIASSON, *rue Saint Jacques, à la Science.*
DAVID l'aîné, *rue Saint Jacques, à la Plume d'or.*
LE BRETON, Imprimeur ordinaire du Roy, *rue de la Harpe.*
DURAND, *rue Saint Jacques, à Saint Landry, & au Griffon.*

M. D C C. LI.

AVEC APPROBATION ET PRIVILEGE DU ROY.

SOURCE 1.20 The title page of the first edition of *The Encyclopaedia*, 1751, artist unknown

HOW DIDEROT TURNED A SINGLE PUBLICATION INTO A TEAM EFFORT BY THE BEST MINDS OF HIS TIME

THE FRENCH KING, LOUIS XV, *granted a royal 'privilege' or permission to publish an encyclopaedia.*

DENIS DIDEROT *had the idea of transforming a simple encyclopaedia into a vehicle for radical ideas. He made a massive effort to coordinate the project, bringing together dozens of experts and writers.*

JEAN LE ROND D'ALEMBERT *assisted Diderot with his scientific expertise, and was co-editor until 1757. He wrote the general introduction to* The Encyclopaedia.

LE BARON D'HOLBACH *was an example of a major contributor. He wrote some 376 articles, and also donated money to help finance the operation.*

LAMOIGNON DE MALESHERBES, *Director of Bookshops, lent his political support.*

MADAME DE POMPADOUR, *mistress to the King, used her influence to support the project.*

DE SARTINE, *the Lieutenant of Police, supported the publication.*

MADAME GEOFFRIN, *an influential woman of the salons, gave financial support to the publication.*

SUBSCRIBERS, *mainly wealthy people from the nobility and the bourgeoisie, supported the project by ordering and paying for the 35-volume set of books in advance.*

BOOKSELLERS, *such as Briasson, David the Elder, Le Breton and Durand supported the project by selling the sets of books.*

CLERGYMEN, *such as the Abbé Mallet, contributed articles on subjects such as theology, possibly with the aim of hiding the radical nature of other articles.*

RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES, *such as the Archbishop of Paris and the Faculty of Theology (University of Sorbonne), condemned certain articles as heretical.*

ROYAL AUTHORITIES, *such as the King's Council and the High Court (Parlement) of Paris, banned the publication in 1752.*

WORKERS, *such as Bonnet, a silk worker, gave detailed descriptions of every aspect of their trades.*

ARTISTS, *such as Cochin le Fils, did detailed drawings of objects, and then engraved them as informative, clear illustrations for the articles.*

EXPERTS, *such as the astronomer Le Roy, provided detailed advice in their fields.*

The introduction to *The Encyclopaedia*

In his introduction to *The Encyclopaedia*, co-editor Jean Le Rond d'Alembert wrote:

> Among men of letters there is one group against which the **arbiters** of taste, the arbiters Judges important people, the rich people, are united: this is the **pernicious** damnable pernicious group of *philosophes*, who hold that it is possible to be a good Frenchman without Harmful **reproach** courting those in power, a good citizen without flattering national prejudices, a good Criticism Christian without persecuting anybody … This way of thinking is for many people an **advocates** unpardonable crime. Supporters
>
> The *philosophes* they say are enemies of authority. This is a more serious **reproach** and deserves a serious reply. The *philosophes* respect the authority of the monarch, to whom it belongs, and whose love of truth and justice they recognise … If those men we call *philosophes* haunted more often the antechambers of ministers, courted ladies of well-known piety, put themselves forward as **advocates** of persecution and intolerance, they would not be the targets for all the insults that are hurled at them. But they honour the great and flee from them; they revere true piety and detest persecuting zeal; they believe the first of Christian duties is charity … This is their real crime.
>
> Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, quoted in Isaac Kramnick (ed.), *The Portable Enlightenment Reader*, Penguin, New York, 1995, pp. 16–17

Questions

1. What, according to d'Alembert, are some of the key features of the *philosophes*' thinking?
2. How does d'Alembert deal with the criticism that the *philosophes* are the enemies of authority?
3. Does d'Alembert appear to think that the *philosophes* are the enemies of religion? Explain your answer.
4. Why does d'Alembert think that good Catholics should not be involved in persecuting the followers of other religions, such as Protestants and Jews?

Article on 'equality' from *The Encyclopaedia*

If we look only at the illustrations from *The Encyclopaedia*, we might think that the work was simply a collection of facts about the science, industries, trades and crafts as they stood in France in the 1750s. When we read the *text*, however, we can see that Diderot and his team included – apparently innocently – other key words that they defined. Let us examine how an 'apparently innocent' definition of 'equality' was actually the pretext for a radical statement of the Enlightenment ideal of 'natural' human rights:

> NATURAL EQUALITY: [Natural rights are] what is [shared] between all men by the constitution of nature alone. This equality is the principle and the foundation of liberty.
>
> Natural or moral equality is therefore founded on the constitution of human nature common to all men, who are born, who grow, who live, and who die in the same manner.
>
> Because human nature exists in all men, it is clear that according to natural rights, each person should respect and treat others as beings who are naturally his equal, that is to say, are as much men as he is.
>
> From this principle of the natural equality of men, several consequences arise.
>
> 1 There results from this principle, that all men are naturally free, and that reason has only made them dependent on others in order to secure their happiness.

continued

2 That despite all the inequalities produced in political government by differences of condition, by nobility, by power, by riches etc., those who are the most elevated above others must treat their inferiors as being naturally equal to them, avoiding any outrage at all, never demanding anything from them above what is owed to them, and in demanding with humanity anything which really is due to them.

Finally, I agree with the wise Hooker, who bases on the undoubted principle of natural equality all the duties of charity, of humanity and of justice, to which men are obliged towards each other.

It is a violation of this principle [of natural equality] that established political or social slavery. From this, it has happened that in countries subjected to arbitrary power, the princes, the courtiers, the prime ministers, those who handle finances possess all the riches of the nation, while the rest of the people do not have what is necessary to live, and the majority of the people suffer in poverty.

Translation by Michael Adcock

Questions

- What, in essence, is this writer's understanding of 'natural equality'. Explain this idea in your own words.
- Explain whether you think people of your own generation still believe that, in modern Australia, all people own 'natural equality'. Why, or why not?
- From what you know of 18th-century Europe, why might a king and his government feel threatened by this set of ideas?
- Why might a rich and powerful member of a noble family disagree with this idea of 'natural equality'?
- Can you trace these Enlightenment ideas in any documents in connection with the American Revolution or the French Revolution?

Conclusion

From what we have read so far, it is clear that the term 'Enlightenment' is much more complicated than this single word suggests.

First, we know that educated people *felt* that they were living in a time when the 'light' of scientific knowledge was removing the 'darkness' of traditional knowledge, superstition and ignorance. This gives credibility to the term, but as historians we need to remember that all history is contestable, and that we must think critically about what the Enlightenment really was.

Second, it is also clear that that this surge in thinking and questioning was sociable: it occurred in a number of casual social networks, rather than in the formal lecture theatres of universities. To really understand the Enlightenment, we must understand 'the birth of public opinion' in the 18th century, and the feeling that educated and intelligent people across the world were joined in a strong but invisible brotherhood called the 'republic of letters'. These people made maximum use of the networks available to them, including cafés, salons, Freemasons' societies and learned academies.

Third, the *philosophes* were successful because they used nearly every existing form of literature and visual art to get their message across, and also invented totally new forms. The most powerful of these was *The Encyclopaedia* which, disguised as factual information, savagely criticised the French monarchy.

The Enlightenment was not a single movement, but it was a powerful one, and was responsible for inspiring many educated people to rethink politics, economics, religion and society.