

EUROPE  
1715–1919

FROM  
ENLIGHTENMENT  
TO WORLD WAR

*Shirley Elson Roessler and Reny Miklos*

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.  
*Lanham • Boulder • New York • Toronto • Oxford*

# CONTENTS

<b>MAPS</b>	ix
<b>ILLUSTRATIONS</b>	xi
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b>	xiii
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	xv
<b>1 IDEAS SHAPE THE MODERN STATE</b>	<b>1</b>
The Age of Enlightenment	1
Society and Culture	18
Society and Economics	31
Society and Politics	40
<b>2 WAR, REVOLUTION, AND THE MODERN STATE</b>	<b>57</b>
International Rivalry in the Eighteenth Century	57
Old Regimes under Stress	70
The French Revolution	86
Napoleon Bonaparte	100
The Congress of Vienna and the Hundred Days	111
<b>3 INDUSTRIALIZATION SHAPES THE NATION-STATE</b>	<b>117</b>
Revolution in Industry and Labor	117
Politics in the Age of Metternich	127
Reform and Revolution	137
Industry Transforms Society	150
The Challenges of Nation Building	169

## CONTENTS

4	<b>WAR, REVOLUTION, AND THE NATION-STATE</b>	183
	The Political Landscape: 1870–1914	183
	The Road to Conflict	200
	The Great War: 1914–1918	213
	The End of the Great War	238
<b>APPENDIX</b>		249
	I. Baron Charles de Secondat de Montesquieu, <i>The Spirit of Laws</i>	249
	II. Cesare Beccaria, <i>An Essay on Crimes and Punishments</i>	252
	III. Adam Smith, <i>An Inquiry into the Nature and the Causes of the Wealth of Nations</i>	253
	IV. Mary Wollstonecraft, <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Women</i>	255
	V. Frederick the Great, Address to His Generals and Staff Officers	257
	VI. Maria Theresa, Letter to Her Son Regarding the Partition of Poland	258
	VII. George III, Letter to Lord North on the Necessity of Subduing the American Colonies	259
	VIII. Viscount Noailles, Speech to the National Assembly	260
	IX. The Revolutionary Calendar	261
	X. Madame de Remusat, Commenting on Attitudes toward Napoleon Bonaparte	262
	XI. Testimony Given before the Ashley Mines Commission	263
	XII. Proclamation of Independence Issued by the Greek National Assembly	266
	XIII. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, <i>Manifesto of the Communist Party</i>	267
	XIV. The People’s Charter of 1842	271
	XV. Decrees Issued by the French Provisional Government	273
	XVI. A Congress of Labor Leaders Issue a Socialist Program at Gotha in 1875	273
	XVII. Herbert Spencer, Unimpeded Struggle Is a Requisite for Progress	274
	XVIII. Victor Emmanuel, Address at the Opening Session of Italian Parliament	276
	XIX. The Ems Telegram	277
	XX. Alexander II, On the Emancipation of the Russian Serfs	278
	XXI. Letter from the “Executive Committee of the Will of the People” to Tsar Alexander III	279
	XXII. The Austrian Ultimatum to Serbia	280
	XXIII. Prince Regent Alexander of Serbia, Telegram to Tsar Nicholas	282
	XXIV. Private Donald Fraser, Journal	283
	XXV. Woodrow Wilson, “Speech on the Fourteen Points”	287
	XXVI. Vladimir Lenin, Rebuttal to Opponents of Insurrection	289
	XXVII. The Treaty of Versailles	291
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		293
<b>INDEX</b>		297
<b>ABOUT THE AUTHORS</b>		317

# Chapter 1

## IDEAS SHAPE THE MODERN STATE

### THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Since historical landmarks rarely coincide with the beginnings of centuries, historians are faced with an ongoing challenge in their attempts to determine feasible divisions of time. The matter is further complicated when single terms become the conventional mantle of an age, era, or century. The eighteenth century and the label “Enlightenment” present such a challenge. Yet, in this case the label is not solely the product of subsequent historical judgment, but has origins in contemporary assessments. The expression “*Siècle des Lumières*” appeared frequently in France during the eighteenth century in descriptions of new ideas taking hold within the ranks of the European intelligentsia. In Germany, by the latter part of the century, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) asked, “What is the Enlightenment?” and answered, “Dare to know! Have the courage to use your own intelligence!” This emphatic response summarizes key aspects of the intellectual values and attitudes of the period. To contemporaries, it suggested that in contrast to past practice, the individual must move away from ignorance and incomprehension and take responsibility for his own knowledge and actions. The directive also implied that the individual was equipped for the task; the spirit to undertake such an endeavor and the intellectual tools required for it were already present, having originated and developed in the European past.

Some strands of influence that contributed to the Enlightenment can be traced to the increasingly prominent role that secular interests came to play

during the Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Attention to the here and now, combined with concerns for the material world, competed with more spiritual priorities. The dominant world view was undetermined. In addition, the unity and strength of the Christian church had been broken by the Protestant-Catholic split of the sixteenth century and by the subsequent religious wars. Secular rulers in many countries had succeeded in asserting the primacy of the state over the church in matters of land control and clerical appointments. At the same time, the more widespread use of the printing press diminished the ability of the church to control what was read and what was taught. By the seventeenth century, the church was no longer in a position to shape and propagate a single worldview for the entire European public. The possibility of an alternate vision was to be found in the scientific and intellectual developments that emerged. It was through the scientific study of nature and the systematic analysis of society that Kant's precursors developed the necessary tools and established a foundation for building new ideas.

In *Novum Organum*, published in 1620, Francis Bacon (1521–1626) set out the procedures for a new method of acquiring knowledge. He argued that the traditional deductive approach by which logical implications were derived from an unquestioned body of principles and sources restricted the expansion of knowledge. Bacon stated that observation and experience were the only sound basis for establishing facts. He maintained that in proceeding from the particular to the general, from the concrete to the abstract, through the systematic use of the senses, one arrives at true knowledge. In this way, preconceived patterns and old prejudices are avoided in the process of determining that which is considered to be true. Although his career kept him in government positions for some time, rather than in science, it was Bacon's formulation of the scientific approach that placed him among the leading exponents of empiricism. His contention was that such an approach to pure science would yield practical benefits for the working world of farming, manufacturing, and trade, and thereby contribute to national wealth and power.

In France, René Descartes (1596–1650), beginning with the postulate, "I think, therefore I am," articulated the principle of systematic doubt. From that position, he used reason to arrive at a number of conclusions. One of these was that there are two kinds of reality in the universe: the realm of subjective experience and the extended, objective world outside the mind. This famous Cartesian dualism, as it came to be called, made available one-half of the universe to a process of investigation in which problems were to be divided into component parts and solved by means of step-by-step mathemat-

ical logic. By this means, untenable hypotheses were to be rejected one by one until only the truth remained. This rational approach displaced reliance on established authority, as the material world at least could be measured, quantified, and brought within the grasp of human understanding.

While Bacon and Descartes devised methodologies based on observation and analysis, others were already employing these techniques using new instruments in their study of astronomy and physics. Johann Kepler (1571–1630) and Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) tested the validity of the Copernican hypothesis, which held that the Sun rather than the Earth was the center of the universe, and investigated planetary and terrestrial motion. Their conclusions disturbed the belief in a cosmic order that extended from a creator to the least of his creations in a great chain of being. The Earth was removed from the center of the solar system, man’s unique place in the universe was questioned, and human faith in a divine being in constant and direct control of the physical world was undermined.

It remained for Isaac Newton (1642–1727) to provide the synthesis and mathematical explanation of motion that suggested that the whole material universe could be understood using the scientific method. Newton’s law of universal gravitation, modified only in the late nineteenth century, held that a precise



1.1. Galileo presents his telescope to the Doge of Venice in August 1609. (Scala/Art Resource, New York)

mathematical relationship described the force by which every body in the universe attracted every other body. It is not surprising that such an assertion encouraged a desire to discover scientific laws in every aspect of the material world.

This rise of modern science coincided with the development of an international scientific community and the establishment of institutions promoting scientific study. Scientists corresponded, traveled, visited, and organized bodies such as the Royal Society of London and the Royal Academy of Science in France, proposed projects, held meetings, and published periodicals. Although applied investigations led to improvements in navigation and weaponry, scientific developments had few consequences for the daily life of the masses in the seventeenth century. The primary outcome was to expand knowledge about nature among the educated and to promote a new way of obtaining knowledge.

The scientific method and its practitioners were highly critical of old techniques that had relied on established authority, sources, and tradition. While some thinkers turned their attention to investigating human society to discover its natural laws and advocate modifications accordingly, scientists usually tended not to take the lead. For example, both Descartes and Newton earnestly wrote in defense of the existence of God and argued for the truth of fundamental Christian doctrines.

Discovery and exploration of the world overseas provided new knowledge about humanity and gave impetus to the direct study of society. The impact of European expansion on other parts of the world was obvious; however, reciprocal influences were also at work. Upper-class Europeans were exposed to a wide range of products from other continents and European material wealth grew. Educated people became aware of an unsettling array of political, economic, and cultural systems abroad. This evidence called into question Europe's assumed monopoly on truth and civilization and led to the emergence of strong currents of skepticism in the sixteenth century.

Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592) exemplified a cautious attitude as expressed in the famous question, “What do I know?” with the implied answer, “Nothing.” In his essays, he suggests that no certain knowledge is possible and that beliefs and customs vary with no definitive judgment being possible. In the seventeenth century the questioning became increasingly determined as it broadened in scope. Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) provided in his *Historical and Critical Dictionary* (1690) a compendium of articles that continued as a favorite reference book of Enlightenment thinkers. This collection conveys the message that what was held as truth by tradition and au-

thority may only be opinion or, worse yet, superstition, with no firm basis available for conclusion or resolution.

The most direct attack on the great problem of knowledge was launched by John Locke (1632–1704) in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690). He believed that certain knowledge is derived from direct experience through the perceptions of the sense organs and reflection by the mind on these perceptions. At birth the mind is a blank tablet, or *tabula rasa*, completely open to environmental influences. Knowledge and subsequent human behavior are products of the environment and can be altered by improvements to social institutions. In this way, Locke's theory contributed to the view that planned constructive action for the purpose of changing institutions and altering collective behavior can ultimately result in social progress.

The question of collective action leads to seventeenth-century political theory and another of Locke's works, *Two Treatises on Government*. Locke's perspective on government must be viewed within the context of his time and the concepts of "natural right" and "natural law." As a rational animal, man is able to use the power of reason to understand the natural law that is integral to the structure of the world. This law is not a human invention, and it distinguishes right from wrong, regardless of time, place, or culture. He concluded that by nature humans possess certain rights that individuals on their own are unable to protect. Therefore, they enter into a social contract creating a government charged with the responsibility of ensuring such basic rights as life, liberty, and property. That government is, however, also constrained by the obligation to observe these self-same rights. In the extreme, should a government violate these contractual rights, the people, having created that government, may exercise their sovereign right to rebel against it. As dramatic as these thoughts appear for their time, caution must be exercised in attributing too much modernity to any of the seventeenth-century thinkers. For Locke, full participation in the social contract and exercise of rights was limited to those possessing wealth and status. Although his examinations of the analogy between family and government led him to view marriage as a form of social contract, he rejected the equality of women in everyday life.

From these antecedents stemmed belief in reason, natural law, and progress. They brought with them the assumption that human reason was capable of discovering the natural laws that governed existence and that structuring a society in accordance with these laws would ensure unending progress. A mechanical interpretation of the universe, along with skepticism and optimism, served to challenge established authority.



## The Philosophes: The Inner Circle

The eighteenth-century intellectuals to whom the spread of Enlightenment ideas is attributed were the French philosophes. Few possessed extensive academic credentials. Many were journalists, publicists, freelancers, even economic and political reformers. Their goal was not the development of systems of thought for the purpose of investigating ultimate questions of existence. Rather, like the thinkers of the Renaissance, they placed man at the center of intellectual activity and sought to understand the complexities of the world in which they lived.

To this task they brought the knowledge provided them by Newton, Locke, and other figures of the previous centuries. Their goal was to pursue the implications of the knowledge that emerged through sense perception and reflection rather than continually to accept the dictates of established authority. In the same way that the Marquis de Laplace (1749–1827), French mathematician, astronomer, and physicist, rounded out Newton’s investigations into celestial mechanics, they wanted to complete the journeys begun in the seventeenth century by using rational analysis to solve the concrete problems of their time. They turned their attention to problems arising from economics, justice, education, religion, and politics. In so doing, policies and institutions were scrutinized in the confidence that natural laws could be discovered and used to implement constructive reforms. Such activities soon brought them into conflict with authority, with the result that the intellectual freedom needed to realize their objectives was hindered by censorship and defensive measures taken by church and state in most European countries.

This challenge to the established beliefs and institutions, aimed at achieving progress, was not based on uniformity of mind and conformity of effort. While the philosophes shared a style of thinking amplified by a critical spirit, there were variations in attitude and vision arising from differences in class, generation, and nationality. Not all were steeped in an optimistic outlook. Despite the attention directed to practical problems and issues, they were not revolutionary crusaders seeking to usurp authority. The philosophes were thinkers and communicators who established a “republic of letters.” This consisted of a loose coalition of literary men and women scattered across western Europe, and while membership in this international family, with its cosmopolitan program, spanned the continent, its headquarters remained in France. France was still the wealthiest and most populous country in Europe, and French remained the international language of the edu-

cated classes in the eighteenth century. It is, therefore, not surprising that the Enlightenment was centered in France.

This intellectual leadership is clearly evident in the early stages of the eighteenth century as the prominent figures of Baron de Montesquieu (1689–1755), François Marie Arouet (Voltaire) (1694–1778), and Denis Diderot (1717–1784) dominated the discourse with a surge of new ideas about society, religion, and politics. To avoid censorship, imprisonment, or the exile that could result from criticism of church and state, the philosophes resorted to spreading their message through subtleties, satires, and double entendres in the content of their novels and plays, as well as through their histories, dictionaries, and encyclopedias. A brilliant example comes from the early works of Montesquieu, who was a presiding judge in the Parlement of Bordeaux, a position inherited from an uncle. In addition to his judicial function, he also engaged in business and academic activities. His views were at times questioned by fellow philosophes for too strongly representing the interests of his social class, but nonetheless the ideas he popularized were fundamental to the Enlightenment. In *Persian Letters* (1721), he satirized European customs by exposing existing practices and beliefs to the critical eye of supposed Persian travelers. Their political and religious comments include the observations that monarchy invariably deteriorates into despotism and that religious wars are the product of intolerance on the part of those who believe in the superiority of their own faith. In early eighteenth-century France, such views constituted an affront to the state and church and were unbecoming enough of a magistrate to require their publication under an assumed name. However, *Persian Letters* served to bring the young writer to the attention of the Parisian elite and provided, in the form of letter writing, a model that would be used frequently throughout the century for the presentation of controversial views.

In his most famous work, *The Spirit of Laws*, Montesquieu turned his attention to government and politics (see appendix, Document I). Applying critical inquiry and historical study to political institutions, Montesquieu concluded that climate and geography determined social customs and forms of government. He attributed vigor, courage, and virtue to people in colder climates and deemed warmer zones more conducive to passion, vice, and cunning. It was because of climate, he suggested, that in hot regions women were marriageable as children and usually aged rapidly. This fact justified the practice of polygamy. According to his theory, more temperate climates ensured slower aging, preserved individual charm, and were conducive to monogamy. These views appear absurd to us, but Montesquieu's efforts to

identify regularities in human society and their causes illustrate the Enlightenment quest for natural laws. As Montesquieu began his search for common elements, he proclaimed, “Laws, in their most general signification, are the necessary relations arising from the nature of things.”

The influence of geography on government, Montesquieu argued, is more complex than is its impact on social customs. In his view, political systems were the product of the national culture and character. These had been previously determined by physical factors that included, among other things, the total area of the territory governed. Montesquieu concluded that monarchy passes into despotism as its area increases and that democracy is best suited to small city-states.

These hypotheses, of course, did not stand the test of time or experience. Montesquieu’s most famous and influential proposal was for separation of powers and a system of checks and balances. Reflecting on Locke’s ideas and his personal experiences in England, he believed that a separation of the executive, legislative, and judicial functions would prevent the undue abuse of power by any one branch of government. Montesquieu admired the balance that England appeared to have achieved since the latter part of the seventeenth century in distributing power among monarchy, Parliament, and independent courts. He suggested that a similar result could be achieved in France by using the regional *parlements*, which were dominated by the aristocracy, to check the legislative and executive prerogatives exercised by royal absolutism. These *parlements* were courts of law, located in Paris and twelve provincial cities, which administered royal justice and served as courts of appeal. In addition, they had the power to register edicts of the king. By refusing to register a royal decree, a *parlement* could block actions of the monarch and thereby influence law making. While certainly not democratic, and while viewed as conservative even by some contemporaries for his support of a strong role for nobility in preventing royal despotism, Montesquieu, like Locke, held that the ultimate source of political authority was popular sovereignty and not divine right.

The name Voltaire has come to be almost synonymous with the Enlightenment. The son of a notary, he was sent as a child to Paris to be educated by the Jesuits in preparation for a career in the law. Voltaire instead made a name for himself as a poet and dramatist while still a young man. In his early works, the wit and sarcasm of his social commentary produced controversy in society and turbulence in his life. Since publication and distribution of ideas in all forms in the eighteenth century was construed to be a political act, it is understandable that Voltaire’s literary gifts, while securing him entrance into the

fashionable salons of the Parisian elite, also resulted in his exile and imprisonment. At twenty-one he was briefly exiled from Paris for an insult to the regent. This was compounded by another published attack, attributed to Voltaire, which sent him to the Bastille for eleven months, followed by further banishment. At this time he began using the name Voltaire. Subsequent public acclamation, including royal acceptance for his poetry and plays, was followed by yet another controversy, a dispute with a nobleman that resulted in three years of voluntary exile in England. His return to France marked Voltaire's first major published contribution to the Enlightenment, *Letters on the English* (1733). He acknowledged the intellectual debt his generation owed to Locke and Newton, praised English economic achievements, and admired the tolerance evident in religion and the press. Voltaire did not share Montesquieu's hope that a system of checks and balances similar to that found in England, but dependent on the *parlements*, could serve to counter monarchical power in France. While he approved of popularly elected representative bodies, he nevertheless had strong doubts about the wisdom of involving the masses in government. Voltaire placed his faith in the education of enlightened monarchs who, ruling with knowledge of and adherence to the principles of natural law and natural rights, would provide for government action in the best interests of the entire population. He also suggested that each state needed to develop a political system best suited to its history.

Voltaire's return to France also coincided with the beginning of his association with the Marquise Emilie du Chatelet (1706–1749). Their initial meeting arose from Voltaire's business dealings, but their intellectual collaboration and romantic interest lasted until her death in 1749, with the knowledge of her tolerant and frequently absent military husband. Because she was a woman, the Marquise was restricted in her academic endeavors and access to publication opportunities, but she nevertheless succeeded in translating Newton's *Principia Mathematica* into French and publishing an essay, *Exposition Abrégée du Systeme du Monde*. She also contributed to the debate raised by the new scientific ideas in her *Institutions des Physiques*, an essay published in 1740. Her chateau near the Lorraine border afforded Voltaire an easy escape from French authorities when circumstances warranted, and it also contained an extensive laboratory where she and Voltaire conducted experiments in chemistry and physics. Her devotion to science was unquestioned, and in unpublished manuscripts, as well as in private and salon conversations, she contributed to the philosophes' understanding of recent scientific developments. Voltaire's interests and inclinations took him in other directions. After the death of the Marquise, he spent almost two years in the

court of Frederick II of Prussia, whom he labeled “the Great,” probably because he came closest to Voltaire’s ideal of an enlightened ruler. Nor did he neglect the French monarchy, completing in 1751 his *Age of Louis XIV*, a history in praise of the achievements of the Sun King. Although critical of despotic and arbitrary monarchical actions, he did not condemn the institution of the monarchy and had even gained enough court support to have himself appointed royal historian (1745).

The cause of religious tolerance rather than that of political reform consumed his greatest energies. In early dramas and poems and in *Letters on the English*, he had denounced the narrow imposition of belief and the harsh intolerance of the church. During the second half of his life, he went on to become a vocal and determined crusader for tolerance. During the 1760s he took up the cause of a Protestant, Jean Calas, who had been wrongly convicted and tortured to death for the murder of his son. The father’s awareness that the younger Calas intended to convert to Catholicism was the apparent motive. Supporters of Jean Calas maintained he was guilty only of attempting to cover up the son’s suicide to prevent public scandal and financial ruin. Voltaire launched a campaign to reopen the case, lending not only his pen and finances to the cause but requesting funds from foreign heads of state. He highlighted the case as an atrocious example of religious fanaticism, part of a long history of Christian intolerance and persecution encompassing Catholic and Protestant faiths alike. Four years after the initial trial, the king’s council proclaimed Jean Calas innocent. Voltaire’s famous cry of “crush the infamous thing” (*écrasez l’infâme*) arose from the tribulations of the Calas affair. Despite his strong stand, Voltaire did see value in religion and retained a belief in God. Like many of the philosophes, Voltaire’s religious views may be regarded as deist. Deists maintained that there were a few common religious principles that could be arrived at through reason alone. There was in essence a natural religion that included the ability to distinguish between good and evil and a belief in a supreme being. This God, however, was not an interventionist being who worked through mystery and miracles in everyday life. In place of such “superstition,” the Newtonian world implied the existence of a creator who had set the universal machine in motion and was not concerned with the day-to-day affairs of humans, although he might preside over his creation at the Last Judgment.

Voltaire accepted these rational tenets, and in the *Philosophical Dictionary* (1764), he subjected Christian belief and practice to scrutiny, identifying contradictions and absurdities. Like Bayle’s, Voltaire’s dictionary became a cherished source of argument for philosophers, while authorities in a

number of major European cities responded by burning available copies. Earlier, in *Candide* (1759), the most enduring of Voltaire's works, he entertained his generation with another satirical work that not only assailed superstition and fanaticism, but questioned the optimism so frequently portrayed by writers of the time.

In 1751 Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert (1717–1783) began collaboration on the twenty-eight volume *l'Encyclopédie*, which was to become the Enlightenment's largest project. The backgrounds of these two men were ideally suited to the compilation of material for such an endeavor. Diderot had written plays and articles on a variety of topics, translated major works and tutored pupils, and had gained extensive writing and editing experience. D'Alembert was a respected mathematician who held a position in the Academy of Sciences in Paris. Their collaborative effort was an attempt to produce a compendium of scientific and social knowledge, not only for the sake of compiling information in a single reference, but, in Diderot's words, to "change the general way of thinking." With contributions from many of the philosophes, including Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, and d'Holbach, as well as Diderot, it reflected the spirit of the age in its skepticism, rationality, and scientific orientation. In addition, it presented knowledge in a manner critical of existing society and institutions. More than any other work of the age, *l'Encyclopédie* was a storehouse of knowledge and ideas created by the philosophes and widely read by a growing literate public. Thus, it not only described and reflected the character of the era, but contributed to the impetus for change. That it was regarded as a threat is substantiated by its official suppression in France, but Diderot continued to publish the work abroad.

### **The Philosophes: A Widening Circle**

Around the midpoint of the eighteenth century, the circle of intellectuals who contributed to Enlightenment ideas increased in number. The currents of thought set in motion during the first half of the century continued; they were broadened in some respects, more thoroughly explored in others, and presented new and interesting challenges. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) represents both continuity and change in Enlightenment thought. Although he gained entry into the intellectual circles of Paris, his origins and temperament contrast with those of his contemporaries. Born in Geneva, Switzerland, his youth was an unhappy one; his mother died in childbirth and his father left him from the age of ten to be brought up by relatives.

Rousseau wandered from Switzerland to Italy and into France in his youth, working at odd jobs, until he gained access to upper-class gatherings in Paris, becoming friendly with Diderot, and in 1749 winning an essay contest sponsored by the Academy of Dijon. Although his subsequent publications were a literary success, his private life and associations with other philosophes remained difficult. He maintained a lengthy relationship with a mistress, Thérèse Levasseur, fathering five children, all of whom were sent to orphanages. In the intense atmosphere of Enlightenment society, he remained an outsider. His lower-class origins, his ideas, and his behavior explain this in part; however, he frequently distanced himself from others through distrust and suspicion. Regardless of the role played by social maladjustment or personality traits, it is certain that his writings had an immediate impact on society, as well as a profound continuing influence. His prize winning essay, published in 1750, paid tribute to “the achievements of minds and men which had succeeded in dissipating by the light of reason all the thick clouds by which [man] was by nature enveloped.” Such a perspective won the applause of his fellow students, and yet the work also presented a challenge, for it asserted that civilization and apparent human progress had corrupted the essential goodness of natural humanity. Rousseau attributed the best human traits of compassion, honesty, understanding, and sympathy to nature. All of these, he maintained, had been corrupted by the existence and growth of social institutions. His attack on these endeared him to other philosophes, but his injection of feeling and intuition as part of the solution was regarded as “primitivism,” or as an “idealization of the uncomplicated.” In other words, it lacked intellectual sophistication.

In the 1760s Rousseau moved from social criticism to revealing his prescription for humanity. Although the original, uncorrupted state of nature could not be recaptured, it was necessary to move beyond the man-made restrictions of civilization. The nature of these human possibilities was made clear in two novels, *Julie, or the New Heloise* and *Emile*. In the former, he presents the ideal picture of a happy marriage of fidelity, devotion to children, economic efficiency and justice, religious tolerance, and sensitivity to the beauty of nature. It was a popular success, but his fellow philosophes were less enthusiastic about the novel because its rural setting and its idealization of nature, emotions, and the senses did not fit with the order and reason of the world of the philosophes. In *Emile*, Rousseau turned his attention to the type of education that would ensure a young child’s proper development, despite an imperfect environment. Under the guidance of a moral adult, Emile is tutored in surroundings that allow little contact with family

members. Rather than teaching from books, the tutor uses nature, example, and instinctive conscience to achieve his goals. The whole issue was rather a thorny one for Rousseau who found himself pondering the question of whether a man who had abandoned his own children could credibly discuss education. However, *Emile*, controversial as it was in its own day for its views, which included the portrayal of women as having the capacity for intellectual development, proved inspirational to later generations as well.

The opening statement of Rousseau's *The Social Contract* (1762), "Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains," remains one of the most stirring passages in Western literature. This work also presents one of the greatest problems of interpretation in political theory. In it Rousseau appeared to contradict his earlier assertion regarding the goodness of man in a state of nature by contending that society was necessary if human progress was to take place. The need for structures posed the problem of how the liberty accorded to individuals by natural right was to be reconciled with the institutional limitations imposed by the existence of government. The solution was embodied in Rousseau's conception of a social contract, which for him was not just an agreement between ruler and ruled, as Locke supposed. Rather, Rousseau seemed to regard the contract as constituting a consensus, or rational unity, among the people themselves, leading to an alternative application of popular sovereignty. From this consensus, a government is elected that possesses the authority to enact the "general will." This general will does not necessarily represent the wishes of the majority, nor the sum total of individual desires, but the fulfillment of the best interests of the community. This could even be at variance with the wishes of any one person or even of many people. An individual can only be truly free when acting in accordance with the welfare of the collective entity. This led Rousseau to state emphatically that government must at times "force" its citizens to be free.

This controversial formulation has given rise to varied interpretations. Some have followed or extended Rousseau's argument to justify complete subordination of individual interests to the common good. Since Rousseau doubted the readiness of people to participate fully in democracy, this could be the common good as defined by an elite. Others have found in the concept an argument for economic equality, seeing it as a prerequisite for participation in the general will, since only then could private interest be transcended. Although the impact of *The Social Contract* was minimal at first, it became a standard by which to critique contemporary politics. And after the tumultuous events of the French Revolution, it emerged as a source of intensive debate.



Some Enlightenment writers, particularly in the last quarter of the century, focused their attention on specific policy issues. In Milan, Cesare Bonesana, Marquis of Beccaria (1738–1794), a professor and civil servant who was well versed in the writings of the French philosophes, published *On Crimes and Punishment* (1764) (see appendix, Document II). His ideas were to have a direct influence on the policies of a number of European states. Beginning with observations made by Montesquieu on penal policies, Beccaria enlarged a debate that continues to this day. He held that the actions of the state in respect to justice must not only protect society, but respect the dignity of individuals, including criminals. In his analyses, Beccaria identified some principles based on natural law. These included his assertion that the purpose of punishment is to deter others from committing crime. In addition, he believed that justice must be achieved quickly and that the certainty of punishment, rather than its severity, serves the primary purpose of deterrence. He thus held that punishment should be commensurate with the injury done to society and must not be based on its association with sin. Torture, capital punishment, and barbarous treatment, he believed, all undermined public support for the law. Beccaria wanted public trials to be held in accordance with consistent standards and equitable treatment for all before the law, regardless of social origin. “Justice,” he argued “is the hand which is necessary to keep the interests united, without which men would return to barbarity;” a problem often associated in his eyes with public executions.

At this time in Europe, the prevailing economic theory was mercantilism, which maintained that wealth was to be measured by the possession of gold and other finite and fixed precious metals. This encouraged nations to pursue prosperity by achieving the most favorable balance of trade at the expense of competitors. The granting of monopolies, establishment of state enterprises, and expansion of colonies were all part of this economic program. In France, a group of thinkers known as *physiocrats*, who were more closely associated with government and policy implementation than were the philosophes, joined the quest to discover the natural laws governing economic behavior. They attacked the theory of mercantilism, and François Quesnay (1694–1774), a physician to Louis XV with a lifelong interest in economics, provided a whole new perspective in a series of articles that included contributions to *l’Encyclopédie*. The *physiocrats* contended that land, not gold, was the basis of wealth. Prosperity, they maintained, follows the establishment of conditions under which the people are able to use their labor and resources to create and exchange products freely, unhindered by government intervention. In an article on grain in *l’Encyclopédie*, he maintained that government controls supported arbitrary prices,

thus undermining efficient production and distribution. The economic well-being of a nation could best be ensured if the people were able to trade products of land and industry without interference. This laissez-faire, hands-off approach would allow unencumbered natural processes to operate.

In Great Britain, the Scottish moral philosopher Adam Smith (1727–1790) formulated the classic statement of laissez-faire economics in his *Inquiry into the Nature and Course of the Wealth of Nations* (see appendix, Document III). Placing greater significance on commercial and industrial activities, Smith held that all components of economic endeavor contributed to progress and growth as long as the role of government was minimized. In an unregulated market, capital and labor, attracted by rising prices, would produce whatever was in short supply. Increases in supply would, in turn, lead to reductions in prices, thereby stimulating demand. Providers of goods and services who sought to maximize their profits and gain a competitive advantage would become more efficient to lower their costs. Consumers would reap the benefits of this competition through further reductions in prices. All parties, acting out of self-interest, would thus be guided by an “invisible hand” to serve the interests of the common good while maximizing their own goals. The same principles, Smith argued, applied internationally. Specialization of production and the unrestricted exchange of products would lead to increasing benefits for all countries. Here was an economic theory that assumed no apparent finite restrictions on economic potential. In place of the mercantilist threat of economic warfare, nations could be competitive partners in mutually beneficial exchanges, not unlike citizens within a country. These arguments, which maintained that freedom and abundance were not mutually exclusive, made Smith the prophet of the free market and free trade.

Although many women writers had published works in the eighteenth century, including Mary Astell with *Some Reflections on Marriage* and Christine McCauley with her eight-volume *History of England*, the scarcity of women in Enlightenment discourse is indicative of the limitations imposed by society, rather than a reflection of ability or effort. Similarly, the issues raised by the philosophes rarely focused on matters that incorporated concerns pertaining to the lives and status of women. In *l'Encyclopédie*, Diderot had recognized marriage as a contractual arrangement and subjected it to some rational analysis, noting that women had been victimized not only by pain in childbirth, but by defective education and a flawed legal system as well. However, in practice there remained the attitude that women by “nature” were morally inferior to men. Rousseau, in *Emile*, did not allow the prospective bride to read books prior to marriage lest she become knowledgeable and less docile.

## CHAPTER 1

It remained for Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) to make the strongest argument of the time in Britain for logically extending natural rights and equality to women. In 1792, writing in the context of the tumultuous political developments taking place across the channel in the form of the French Revolution, Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (see appendix, Document IV), in which she argues that contemporary distinctions made between men and women are irrational. In addition, she calls for female suffrage



**1.2.** Mary Wollstonecraft, an early advocate of the rights of women (Tate Gallery, London/Art Resource, New York)

and granting of the right to hold elected office, thus precipitating a significant step in the discussion of the role and status of women in British society.

As already demonstrated by the experience of Rousseau, the primacy of reason was not unanimously accepted in the eighteenth century. As the century drew to a close, other complex currents of thought contributed to the Enlightenment. For example, the Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711–1776) examined the limits of reason as a means to practical knowledge. His persistent skepticism led him not only to criticize existing institutions, but to question whether reason and nature alone account for human knowledge and actions. Hume concluded that the simple ideas humans derived from sense impressions are combined into complex ideas that do not necessarily correspond to objective reality. This was due, he said, to the fact that their formulation is a product of habit rather than logic. While committed to the use of reason to analyze human behavior, Hume did not believe that immutable laws of nature were waiting to be discovered. When he turned his attention to religion, Hume found that the human need for gods originated in the fears experienced by primitive peoples in threatening environments. Polytheism developed over time into monotheism, which, in his view, did not herald progress but gave rise to division, dispute, and intolerance. Hume decided that neither reason nor progress was evident in the history of religion. Neither the established church nor deists were spared his criticism.

Even deeper criticism of religion came from the pen of Baron Paul d'Holbach (1723–1789), whose philosophic circle had briefly included the visiting Hume. D'Holbach deemed the origin of all religion and its primary human motivation to be the human need to avoid pain. In his *System of Nature* (1770), he extended his argument to develop a determinism that rejected all belief systems that were not guided solely by reason, experience, and nature. D'Holbach wrote:

The enlightened man is man in his maturity, in his perfection, who is capable of pursuing his own happiness, because he has learned to examine, to think for himself, and not take that for truth upon the authority of others, which experience has taught him examination will frequently prove erroneous.

Such views, while not contrary to mainstream Enlightenment thought, carried d'Holbach to a rigid atheism that other philosophes found to be as dogmatic as church intolerance.

In Germany, the Enlightenment produced a number of intellectual variants of which the school of German idealism is the best known and Immanuel

Kant the most renowned proponent. The man who summarized the challenge of his era with the motto “Dare to know” thoroughly investigated how the individual can acquire knowledge. His answer did not provide comfort to those that placed supreme value on human reason. In contrast with the prevailing Enlightenment tendency to believe that knowledge reflects the objects of perception, Kant held that our minds are actively involved in creating knowledge, maintaining that the structure of the external world conforms to concepts present in the mind. These concepts are the products of individual experiences so that universal reason alone cannot be the basis of knowledge. In addition, Kant argued that there were some questions, such as the existence of God, which reason could not adequately address and would result in logical contradictions. In his mind, reason was capable of proving both thesis and antithesis. Kant was, in fact, asserting that the capacity of human reason to address the problems posed by life was not unlimited.

## **SOCIETY AND CULTURE**

The philosophes constituted an elite component of the social, economic, and cultural milieu during the eighteenth century. The unique status of these writers and intellectuals and the bonds between them are captured in the expression associated with them, the “republic of letters.” These individuals regarded themselves as part of a cosmopolitan group whose intellectual prowess cut across existing political and geographical boundaries. Those with the advantages of economics, education, and opportunity participated directly through the written word and through travel. In France, intellectuals eagerly read the journal *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* produced by Pierre Bayle. From the British Isles, many undertook the continental “grand tour,” and from the mainland, sojourns, whether voluntary or forced by political exile, were frequent.

### **Enlightenment Thought and the Public**

Central to the discussion and dissemination of enlightened ideas were the salons, academies, and Masonic lodges of the eighteenth century. Salons, gatherings of the social and cultural elite presided over by a host or hostess, had become part of urban life in the preceding century and provided contact between intellectuals, including foreign visitors, thereby adding to the exchange of new ideas. Participants could express themselves without fear of

reprisal from authorities; however, they were required to do so in a manner that made their ideas understandable, thus increasing their potential for wider dissemination and influence. An important opportunity provided by the salons was that of making contacts that could result in official appointments or financial support.

Although such gatherings occurred in all of the major cities of Europe and many provincial towns, the most famous were held in Paris. There, as elsewhere, the salons were conducted mainly by women from noble or wealthy bourgeois families, although some of the philosophes themselves, like Voltaire and d'Holbach, also hosted sessions. The Parisian salons of greatest repute were those frequented by the renowned French philosophes and visiting intellectual and cultural dignitaries. Louis XV's mistress, the Marquise de Pompadour, was perhaps the most notable of the social elite to preside over such assemblies. However, the best-known hostesses included Marie Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin (1699–1777) and her rival Marquise Marie de Vichy-Chamrond de Deffand (1679–1780). Geoffrin, wife of a bourgeois merchant, conducted artistic gatherings on Mondays and reserved Wednesdays for literary discussions. At various times, the guests included Montesquieu, Voltaire, d'Holbach, and occasionally foreign figures, with King Gustavus of Sweden and the English philosopher David Hume among the most prominent. She also provided financial support for some philosophes and secretly gave money to Diderot's *l'Encyclopédie* when the project encountered financial difficulties in 1759. The Marquise de Deffand, separated from her military husband, also welcomed Voltaire, Montesquieu, and d'Alembert, but eventually became an antagonist of the encyclopedists. These and others like Madame Helveticus (1722–1780), wife of the French philosopher, and Julie-Jeanne de Lespinasse (1732–1776), one time companion and assistant to du Deffand, demonstrate the significance of women as protectors and facilitators of Enlightenment thought and art. One of the earliest salons was hosted by Anne-Thérèse de Marguenat de Courcelles, the Marquise de Lambert (1647–1733). In her youth, she had been encouraged in her literary interests at home, and she went on to publish works on education. De Lambert attracted to her circle a number of women who were also strongly dedicated to intellectual pursuits. This, however, was the exception in the salons, as men played the dominant role in conversation under the skilful guidance of their hostesses.

In addition, through the learned academies, eighteenth-century ideas reached a wider audience. The most prominent were institutions that had been established in national capitals such as the French Academy of Sciences, the



1.3. The reading of Voltaire's tragedy *L'orphelin de la Chine* at the salon of Madame Geoffrin (c.1755) (Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, New York)

Royal Society of London, and the Berlin Academy. However, the number of these institutions increased markedly throughout the century, particularly in France, where there were academies in more than thirty provincial cities. These academies promoted intellectual activity by providing an institution where people interested in science and philosophy could gather regularly for discussion, debate, and lectures. Unlike the universities, which with few exceptions remained enclaves of established thought and doctrine, the academies encouraged the exploration of new ideas and began to contribute to a climate favorable to a wide range of reforms.

The Masonic lodge was a third formal institution that made possible the wider dissemination of Enlightenment ideas. This fraternal organization of the Freemasons probably originated out of seventeenth-century stonemasons' guilds, but a century later in England, the order aimed to bring people together around a set of universal religious beliefs that cut across conflicting dogmas and diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. The ideas of the early Enlightenment, which valued tolerance, reason, and progress, were welcomed, and Masonic organizations spread across Europe and North America. Although practices and beliefs were not uniform from one Masonic lodge to another, their humanitarian and educational activities made them effective organizations for spreading the messages of the Enlightenment.

The coffeehouses of the eighteenth century, although not formal organizations like academies or lodges, also played a significant role in the spread of new ideas. These establishments had originated in the previous century, when coffee had gradually become the favorite drink in England. This enthusiasm spread to the continent, and by 1715 there seem to have been more than 3,000 coffeehouses in London, where merchants in particular met for conversation and increasingly to conduct business. In the lively atmosphere of these public meeting places, informed discussion contributed to an increasing familiarity with new ideas and to their wider dissemination. Some establishments included intellectual figures among their clients. In London, Samuel Johnson's Literary Club met in a coffeehouse and Voltaire frequented the Café Procope in Paris, where many lively discussions took place.

Participation in salons or access to the academies was restricted by custom, if not by law. The popularity and activities of Masonic lodges and coffeehouses indicated that the greatest potential audience for the philosophes lay in the increasingly literate and growing middle class. The growth in literacy between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries is attributed by many historians to the religious competition between Protestant and Catholic reformers, who were hoping to use reading as an effective means of proselytizing. The largest gains in literacy were made in the eighteenth century with 50 to 60 percent of males becoming literate in some regions of England and France. Although literacy among women was also increasing, a variety of social and cultural obstacles accounted for the fact that literacy rates for women were less than half those for men. To meet the demands and take advantage of the opportunities presented, the number of periodicals published in the eighteenth century increased significantly in England, where there were approximately twenty-five journals and newspapers in 1700 and over 150 a century later. These ranged from the famous *Spectator* of Joseph Addison and Richard Steel, specializing in single-issue essays, to erudite journals that featured critical articles on science and philosophy. In addition, larger circulation newspapers intended originally for entertainment were also beginning to report political news.

The book trade expanded dramatically. In France, it appears that the ownership of books may have increased as much as tenfold during the eighteenth century, and a major shift occurred as the number of secular titles grew more rapidly than the previously dominant religious ones. Erratic efforts at censorship presented obstacles; however, these did not stop the flow of critical books into France and other states as publishers smuggled works



in through neighboring regions. While the writings of the philosophes certainly reached the general public through the great cultural project of *l'Encyclopédie*, which appeared between 1751 and 1782, it was nonetheless political and economic thought and social criticism in more popularized versions that had the widest readership. For example, a Swiss supplier receives the following request from a French bookseller: "Please send the invoice in advance: *Venus in the Cloister* or *The Nun in the Nightgown*, *Christianity Unveiled*, *Memoirs of Mme la Marquise de Pompadour*, *Inquiry on the Origin of Oriental Despotism*, *The System of Nature*, *Theresa the Philosopher*, *Margot the Campfollower*." If the scarcity of recognizable philosophical titles is an indication, it seems that the reading public was not focused on abstract questions. Rousseau's most widely read works were his novels, not *The Social Contract*.

Beyond the popularization of scientific, historical, and philosophical writers lay the publishing world of the "scribblers," as Voltaire aptly named them. These individuals worked in a competitive journalistic milieu known in England as Grub Street. To survive, desperate writers and unscrupulous booksellers produced pamphlets that contained no abstract ideas, followed few principles, and provided no program. Depending on scandals, real or fabricated, sensational gossip, and scurrilous attacks, the pamphleteers criticized all aspects of the social order. Clergy, nobility, and royalty were favorite targets of this printed venom, which vulgarized and demeaned individuals by means of a combination of pornography and dubious moral innuendoes. The quantity of the material produced leaves no doubt as to the extent of its readership; however, its impact remains a matter of speculation. Although such attacks and criticisms did not disseminate ideas as such, their continuing influence did contribute to a progressive undermining of the existing social order. The exact extent to which printing and reading changed people's ideas and influenced their behavior is debatable. The presence of alternative literature suggests there were limits to the influence of secular thought. Many of the philosophes, in attempting to reach the educated public, did not believe they could have much impact on "the blind and noisy multitude." Some historians argue that differences between the upper and middle classes of society were not extensive, but that dramatic distinctions remained between the educated and privileged and the masses. In addition, the growth of libraries and the increasing popularity of reading clubs assisted in the spread of literacy among the commoners.<sup>1</sup>

Among the urban artisans and poor, as well as the peasants of the countryside, oral culture predominated, but there did exist a literature quite dis-

tinct from the reading material of the upper classes. Small books and pamphlets, usually written anonymously and printed on cheap paper, circulated and were read aloud to those who were illiterate. A large portion of this literature was religious and included Bible stories, catechisms, devotional manuals, and accounts of the lives of saints. Many were almanacs with practical information or instructional pamphlets that gave advice on daily living or health. Still other publications relayed a variety of tales, fables, or mixtures of fact and fiction that provided entertainment. Many historians regard this literature as having been escapist, or at least as having prompted acceptance of the status quo mainly because it did not confront problems with new ideas. Among the social groups who formed the audience, it is certainly more likely that the material supported tradition rather than promoted change.

### Popular Culture and Religious Revival

In addition to the differences in literature, which indicate that the philosophy of the Enlightenment was far removed from the life and work of peasants and urban laborers, other aspects of popular culture suggest the social distance involved. As a counterpart to salons and coffeehouses, there existed local taverns where common people gathered for socializing and merrymaking, often with alcoholic beverages. Although the reform-minded artist William Hogarth (1697–1764) did not spare the English aristocracy in his visual social commentaries, the etching *Gin Lane* perhaps typifies the attitudes of the educated elite toward popular culture in the eighteenth century. Hogarth shows the results of excessive gin drinking by common people, in contrast to the desirable moderation evident in the companion piece *Beer Lane*.

Social interaction and recreation tended to bear the strong marks of tradition, as family gatherings and festivals combined with religious celebrations and popular recreation in the formation of common patterns. These provided occasions for socializing to take place between boys and girls, as well as ritual observations of the church calendar. Local soccer matches were becoming popular in England, but more commercially oriented recreation like traveling shows, horse racing, and boxing were also gaining importance. Blood sports remained popular. In bull baiting, a pack of dogs would attack a tethered steer that an innkeeper had usually provided, along with the site and the refreshments. This form of entertainment, as well as cockfighting, was increasingly denounced by the educated elite. Members of this class were in the process of embracing enlightened attitudes and, as a result, were experiencing a reduced enthusiasm for such pastimes.



1.4. *Gin Lane* by William Hogarth (Giraudon/Art Resource, New York)

The strongest indication that the common people were receptive to calls for change was evidenced not by their response to intellectual appeals, but by the religious revival of the eighteenth century. In the continental heartland of the Reformation, the well-established Lutheran church was being viewed by some of its members as having itself become hierarchical in structure and complacent in its mission. The Protestant revival began in northern Germany with a movement known as Pietism. In place of theological concern and doctrinal disputes, Pietists placed emphasis on Bible study, prayer, and

Christian rebirth in everyday life. They engaged in these activities, reasserted the priesthood of all believers, and went beyond personal inner renewal in the demonstration of their commitment. Pietists established schools, orphanages, and other charitable institutions within their communities. The majority remained members of the established churches; however, in a few instances differences gave rise to new sects, such as the Moravian Brethren founded by Count Nicholas Zinzendorf (1700–1760) in Saxony. Strongly influenced by these examples, John Wesley (1703–1791), a minister in the Church of England, launched a crusade to reinvigorate personal worship with emotional commitment and enthusiasm for good works. Labeled “methodists” by their critics for their constant devotional expressions, Wesley and his followers eventually broke with the Church of England in 1784 and established a new denomination in 1789. The message of Pietists and Methodists appealed least to the elites of their societies and gained the largest following among the lower classes, who felt their plight and position had been ignored by the religious hierarchy. Nevertheless, these Protestant religious movements were consistent with the call for less reason and more passion which occurred during the late Enlightenment.

It is more difficult to assess the strength of religious revival in Catholic regions of Europe. Roman Catholicism had earlier experienced resurgence, partly in response to Protestantism, but in the eighteenth century it was strongly attacked by many of the philosophes. The campaign led by Voltaire during the Calas affair was one of a number of instances in which repression and intolerance were publicly criticized. Despite such revelations, attacks, and anticlericalism, Catholic belief remained strong. Religion and the local parish church continued to play integral roles in community life. In some areas, clergy attempted to reduce or eliminate aspects of religious practices that were more associated with folklore or pagan ritual than with Christian belief. For example, it was difficult to dissuade peasants from the expectation that special blessings, saints’ relics, or sacred springs would provide higher crop yields, physical healing, or family well-being. In any case, Catholics continued to attend church on major feast days in massive numbers. The piety of the common people was not diminishing, however confused their beliefs may have been.

## High Culture

Scholars differentiate between popular culture, which is the written and unwritten culture of the common people, and high culture, the literary and artistic

culture of the wealthy and educated segment of society. While popular culture remains essentially traditional, trends and shifts in high culture can be more readily associated with different time periods. However, such developments in eighteenth-century Europe were varied in nature, with continuity and change evident according to geography and tradition. The seventeenth century had witnessed a major surge of creative activity in the visual arts, producing the dominant baroque style of art and architecture. In the latter, the use of curved, flowing lines created a sense of motion, as is evident in the Bernini's colonnade in front of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome and the papal throne he designed for the interior. In art, combinations of diagonal and curved lines and strong primary colors similarly evoked motion and drama. Artists of the seventeenth century like Caravaggio, Rembrandt, and Rubens are regarded as outstanding representatives of this style. In part, the baroque style had evolved to satisfy the aristocratic and royal patrons of the era, and the pattern continued into the early eighteenth century, but by the 1730s and 1740s, a new style known as rococo emerged. Derived from the French word *rocaille*, which referred to an elaborate decoration of rocks and shells frequently found in the grottos of baroque gardens, this style combined shell motifs with other scroll and ribbon elements to give an expression of lightness and gaiety. Paintings tended to explore pleasurable feelings and frequently included pastoral themes or simple daily activities. Interlaced designs with delicate and graceful contours contributed to an effect of softness and charm. This occurred concurrently with the prevalent concept of sensibility stemming from the psychology of Locke, which focused on sensation and experience as the basis of understanding.

In France, where the rococo style emerged, Antoine Watteau (1684–1721) revealed early in the century a world of aristocratic elegance and refinement, tinged with the recognition of the fragile nature of joy and pleasure. His *The Pilgrimage to Cythera*, which depicts upper-class pilgrims about to leave the island of Cythera after having paid homage to Venus, the goddess of love, illustrates this sensibility. Toward the end of the century, Watteau's countryman Jean Honoré Fragonard (1732–1806) depicted in *The Swing* a world of dreams, showing adults abandoning themselves to play in an enclosing landscape that shuts out the realities of life. The pastel hues and arrangement of trees focus attention on the delights of the young baron who commissioned the work and accentuate the charms of his mistress.

In architecture, rococo style was more conducive to interior decoration; ornamentation of the ceilings and walls and integrated paintings were intended to delight the eye with a sensual appeal. In France, the Pompadour rooms at Versailles serve as one example, but it was in the smaller chateaux



1.5. *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* by Antoine Watteau (Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, New York)

and townhouses of the nobility where such decoration often occurred. In southern Germany and Austria, the relatively lengthy peace that followed extended religious conflicts provided an opportunity for new buildings that exemplify the complexity of rococo style. Two pilgrimage churches in southern Germany suggest the high point of rococo. Near Bamberg, the church of the *Vierzehnheiligen* (Fourteen Saints) designed by Balthazar Neuman (1687–1753), although displaying a relatively simple exterior, houses an interior of elaborate decoration. The ornate ceiling spills downward in a seemingly unbroken flow past a hidden conjunction with the walls. A series of curves then carry the viewer's eye to the floor. Outside the village of Wies, a pilgrimage church designed by Domenikus Zimmerman (1685–1766) presents even greater richness of detail. In a contemplative setting of meadows, distant forests, and mountains, the interior design is meant to evoke a joyful love of God.

A style in which artists competed with the exuberances of rococo emerged by the middle of the century. Classical models and themes had never been totally ignored or submerged in any of the visual arts, and by the 1750s general interest in antiquity and the unearthing of the ruins at Pompeii and Herculaneum renewed enthusiasm for ancient culture. In addition, the eighteenth-century emphasis on reason contributed to a preference for

simplicity, order, and geometric form. These elements combined to favor compositions in paintings and building designs that incorporated more linear forms, restrained appeals to sentiment, and were subtler in their use of color. The style in which the artist expected to appeal more to intellect than the senses is known as neoclassicism. An architectural example is the portico of the Pantheon in Paris designed by Jacques Germain Soufflot (1755–1792), whose use of columns and pediments was inspired by ancient Roman temples. In painting, the style and content of *Oath of the Horatii* by Jacques Louis David (1748–1825) clearly contrasts with the lush and effete world of rococo artists. Making use of new knowledge of dress and style gained from excavations, David draws upon a Roman story to appeal to the civic virtues and honor of the viewers, rather than to their sentiments.

In England, Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), famous for his portrait paintings, introduced neoclassical restraint and calm into his work, frequently using elements derived from antiquity. His *Discourses to the Royal Academy*, dedicated to the institution of which he was to become president, presented a firm defense of eighteenth-century neoclassicism. Reynold's main rival, Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), is less open to categorization. His portraits rarely include classical elements, nor do his landscapes bear the lush marks of rococo. His work exhibits a straightforward quality that is relatively free of dramatic effect and embellishment.

Another English artist whose work was popular with contemporaries and defies easy classification is William Hogarth. His famous series of prints provides insightful observations and satirical comment on aspects of eighteenth-century English life. In addition to *Gin Lane* and *Beer Street*, Hogarth created a series entitled *The Harlot's Progress* (1732), *A Rake's Progress* (1735), and *Marriage à la Mode* (1745), among others. In true Enlightenment form, he drew upon varied sources for inspiration in his satirical and moral commentary on the frivolity, extravagance, and decadence of the privileged classes. He was internationally renowned and popularly favored by the middle class, among whom his works sold well.

The novel as a literary form gained popularity and experienced rapid development in the eighteenth century, reaching far beyond the merely romantic or picaresque as was characteristic of earlier works. Late in his career, Daniel Defoe (1660–1731) published *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), which became a success with middle- and lower-class readers, as well as a favorite of Enlightenment readers. The natural common sense, self-reliance, and independence demonstrated by the protagonist when confronting dangerous situations emphasized values prized by various elements of the reading public.

In 1740 Samuel Richardson (1689–1761) published his first of a number of sentimental novels, *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, in which the author intimately and extensively describes private emotions and lauds the simple virtue of a heroine who contends with a scoundrel lover and his family. While it was an immediate success, there was also a negative reaction to the simplistic vision of morality presented in the novel. Henry Fielding (1707–1754) published a burlesque entitled *Shamala*, followed by *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and his masterpiece, *Tom Jones* (1749). Fielding's depictions of English life from the alleys of London to the stately country houses of the upper classes depicted characters enmeshed in believable, real-life experiences that gave his novels a complexity appreciated by the critical Enlightenment mind.

Similar in manner to Richardson's sentimentality were the novels of the French writer Antoine-François Prévost (1697–1763). But perhaps Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Emile* are better examples of novels that portray love and duty in the same spirit. Prior to the end of the century, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), in his short novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), provided a critical examination of the young German's society. However, themes of self-pity and self-loathing were more prominent in the romantic movement, which was to assert itself in the nineteenth century.

Literary landmarks outside the realm of the novel in England include the work of Samuel Johnson (1709–1784) and Edward Gibbon (1737–1794). Johnson, striving to create order out of linguistic disarray, wrote his *Dictionary of the English Language* between 1747 and 1755 and, thus, ensured his position as “a Newton of the English language.”<sup>2</sup> Classical interest and neo-classical temperament combined in Gibbon to produce the account of the glories and disintegration of the great Roman Empire. The final volumes of *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* were published in 1788. The work was subjected to strong criticism from religious quarters as a result of his placing a significant part of the blame for the demise of the empire on Christianity. However, his critiques of intolerance, the prominence he gave to reason, and his commitment to freedom were welcomed by enlightened circles. This work has remained one of the masterpieces of eighteenth-century prose and a landmark of historical writing.

Music in the eighteenth century underwent perhaps the most significant development of all the arts. Audiences beyond the bounds of the privileged classes, which included mainly the courts of the monarchs and the homes of the wealthy, were introduced to the beauty of music. The traditional patronage of



the elite in sustaining creative artists slowly gave way to public concerts, and public concert halls were built in major cities. Whereas changes in painting and literature are most strongly associated with France and England, it was in Austria and Germany that music flourished. In the early decades, baroque themes remained in the forefront. Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), more famous as an organist and improviser than as a composer in his lifetime, was ultimately regarded as one of the greatest composers who ever lived. In comparison with other major musical figures, he lived a rather provincial life in Germany, but his prolific output includes a variety of forms. He favored the fugue, and his achievement in that style is best appreciated in a collection of works called *The Well-Tempered Klavier*. Throughout his compositions the single strongest theme is his deep religious faith, as exemplified in the powerful oratorio *Saint Matthew Passion*. Bach did not ignore the secular world. In the *Coffee Cantata* he satirized societal concerns about the new drink gaining popularity in Europe. His best-known works, however, are the six *Brandenburg Concertos* originally written for the private entertainment of one of his patrons, the Margrave of Brandenburg.

In contrast to Bach, George Frederich Handel (1685–1759), also born in Germany, gained early fame in Italy and later settled permanently in England. His most imposing efforts were his operas and oratorios, of which *The Messiah* became the best loved and most celebrated. The presence of 3,000 people at his funeral service attests to his having reached a musical audience in the middle class, far beyond the privileged circles of nobility and royalty.

The classical music that emerged in the second half of the eighteenth century shared with neoclassical art and literature a preference for clarity, balance, order, and a measure of intellectual weight. During this period, Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) composed operas, string quartets, and piano sonatas, but made his greatest impact through his symphonies. The changes to the symphony, many of which were initiated by Haydn, are sometimes equated with the development of the novel in the eighteenth century. Haydn routinely wrote in four, rather than in three, movements and preferred to incorporate the newly developed pianoforte instead of the harpsichord. His innovations earned him the title “father of the symphony.”

Haydn had a strong influence on Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791), whose contributions to music, frequently referred to as the classical synthesis, gave expression to the unity of reason and sensitivity:

[P]assions, whether violent or not, must never be expressed in such a way as to excite disgust, and music, even in the most terrible situations, must never

offend the ear, but must please the hearer, or in other words must never cease to be music. . . . Melody is the essence of music.<sup>3</sup>

Such universality emerges in his compositions, which include all forms, but personal emotions are also explored. He achieved this with a mastery of technical skill recognized by Haydn, who remarked to the young man's father, "Before God and as an honest man, I tell you that your son is the greatest composer known to me either in person or by name."

Mozart applied his craft to a variety of musical forms including symphonies, masses, and string quartets, but of particular excellence were his series of concertos written for the piano. The rich themes that characterize each work complement one another and leave the listener with a strong impression of coherence. Many regard Mozart's operas as his greatest achievements and as representing the best of human sensibility and aspiration. The *Marriage of Figaro* expresses in restrained and classical form the varied feelings of the age, ranging from protest against the abuse of human rights to the very personal emotions of resentment and pleasure.

Although Mozart experienced early recognition and acclaim, his brief life sadly fell into increasingly difficult financial and personal circumstances. However, to the end, his music continued to express the faith in humanity so characteristic of the attitudes of many of the philosophes.

## SOCIETY AND ECONOMICS

While science and thought had changed by the beginning of the eighteenth century, everyday life had not. Reason and progress were still concepts for the privileged few, and European society was largely agrarian, as it had been for hundreds of years. It is little wonder then that the physiocrats responded to the mercantilist argument with a focus on land rather than on commerce. After all, land remained the economic basis of life. In all countries, more than 80 percent of the population lived in the countryside and depended directly on the soil for a living; furthermore, most of the remainder relied to some degree on agriculture for their roles in the economy.

### Land and Agriculture

Agricultural practices had changed very slowly since the Middle Ages. The work of ploughing fields, sowing seed, and harvesting grain had not been

substantially affected by technological innovation, and the yields were little more than those of earlier centuries. In good years, enough food was produced to sustain the rural family, but poor harvests due to bad weather could result in rapid depletion of meagre reserves. This led to crises in which famine was compounded by illness and disease. Even when not severely affected by the whims of nature, peasants were subject to the impact of price fluctuations, with any change in supply or demand tending to affect the rural poor sharply, because crises in the countryside could be worse than in urban centers where local authorities usually provided stores of reserves.

The traditional open-field system was an important factor limiting agricultural production in much of western Europe. Peasants living in villages worked large fields in the surrounding areas that were divided into long, narrow strips, with individual families, either as owner-producers or tenant farmers, working patches scattered in the communal area. Whether they owned the property themselves or it was held by nobility, clergy, or wealthy townspeople, the pattern of farming was similar. To combat the problem of soil exhaustion, a three-year rotation system had developed in which two years of cropping were followed by a year of fallow for each strip. Each year at least one-third of all cropland lay idle. In addition “common” lands were set aside for hay making and grazing, and these remained unaltered over time. This system provided barely adequate supplies for the existing population and did not allow for potential increases in production. The precarious nature of this farming system was captured in Jean François Millet’s famous nineteenth-century painting *The Gleaners*, which depicts impoverished French peasant women searching amidst stubble for grain and stalks the harvesters have missed.

Circumstances for peasants in eastern Europe, where many were still bound by the restrictions imposed by serfdom, were even harsher and more oppressive. Land ownership could entitle the lord to require hereditary service of peasants, as was the case with the *robot* in Austria; this amounted to forced labor. In Russia it was customary to enumerate property holdings by counting the number of male serfs or “souls,” rather than by giving the size of land holdings. Because these serfs and their families could be sold with or without the land, the differences between serfdom and slavery were minimal.

Although social conditions for peasants in western Europe were better, and they were free to own land, daily life was still very harsh. The economic uncertainties resulting from weather and farming practices were compounded for the peasantry by their low status in the social hierarchy. In Britain and the Netherlands, serfdom had been replaced with landlord-tenant arrangements; however, in France in the eighteenth century, despite

significant land ownership by peasants in some regions, vestiges of serfdom remained. Peasants who owned their land could still be legally required to pay a variety of feudal dues (for use of mill, wine press, and oven) and perform work on the land of the local lord. The state imposed additional burdens: property taxes, further work requirements such as the *corvée* (two or three days' road maintenance or monetary equivalent) in France, and taxes on essential commodities, particularly the *gabelle* (salt), were all inescapable.

The peasantry was not in a position to challenge the formidable political forces successfully to improve its condition. In Russia, dozens of peasant revolts in the eighteenth century culminated in a rebellion led by Emelyan Pugachev (1726–1775), who promised freedom and land to his followers. Like previous uprisings, this one was brutally crushed and its leader executed. Smaller revolts occurred in Bohemia, Transylvania, Moravia, and Austria. In western Europe large-scale protests generally did not occur. Whether violent or not, rural protests are regarded as having been conservative in nature, taking place in opposition to current reforms, which were perceived as threatening the precarious stability of the food supply.

Nonetheless during the eighteenth century new farming methods were introduced that in the view of some historians constituted an agricultural revolution. Slow implementation of technological innovations rather than radical political action brought about improvements in production. Many of the new methods originated in the Netherlands. This more densely populated region, with a higher degree of urbanization stimulated by commerce and trade, created pressure and markets for foodstuffs. Marshes and swamps were drained to increase the area under cultivation. The practice of fallowing land was replaced by continuous rotation of alternating grains, which served to rejuvenate soil and increase production. Well-established crops such as peas and beans were systematically rotated with newer varieties from overseas such as turnips, potatoes, and clover. Some of the new crops served as animal feed, allowing farmers to maintain cattle and sheep through the winter. This provided not only an improved diet for people, but more manure for fertilizer, which further enhanced crop yield. While the Dutch provided initial leadership, the English quickly took advantage of Dutch expertise by employing engineers and workers from the Netherlands to carry out drainage projects, which brought new fertile land under cultivation. Dutch precedents were also significant in the introduction of new crops to eastern England by Charles Townsend (1674–1738). Enthusiastically using clover and particularly turnips in crop rotation, he earned the nickname “Turnip” Townsend, as production on his estates increased substantially.

This motivation to improve farming methods was also evident in the contributions of Jethro Tull (1674–1741). With an enlightened attitude, Tull conducted research and experiments in ploughing and seeding, the use of horses as draft animals, and selective livestock breeding, all with considerable success. New methods of animal breeding were also pioneered by Robert Bakewell (1725–1795), resulting in larger and more productive livestock and more meat and milk on English tables. Advances in English agriculture were noted with satisfaction by agronomist and traveler Arthur Young (1741–1820), who commented in his *Travels in France* that the average yield of wheat and rye was twenty-four bushels in England, but only eighteen in France. He also maintained that the quality of wheat and corn in France was inferior to that of England. More significant than Young's strongly biased observations is his attribution of the French disadvantage to the continuation of leaving a field fallow each year and the small size of landholdings.

The gains made in England through technological innovation and land reorganization entailed costs, which fuelled controversy at the time and contribute to historical debate today. The traditional open-field system, with its multiple strips, the practice of fallowing, and the provision of “commons” for pasture imposed production limits. Yet, in the experience of peasant farmers, any proposed changes appeared to threaten the tenuous stability of the peasants' lives. It is then not surprising that the initiative for agricultural change came from those able to bear the risk of innovation and investment in new technology. The large landowners used legislation as a basis for enclosing lands to engage in large-scale enterprises. And since they also controlled Parliament, “enclosure acts” were passed, which authorized the enclosure of land that was rented to tenant farmers.

The debate surrounding the impact on peasants and tenant farmers of blocking fields for innovative large-scale production remains unresolved. Some historians focus on the injustice of large landowners with economic and political power forcing the fencing of open fields and the division of “commons.” The latter were divided in proportion to property held in open fields. The extensive costs resulting from surveying and legal procedures were divided among all landowners, forcing many peasants to sell out simply to cover their share of the expenses. Those already landless no longer had access to the commons where they had been able to raise an animal or two while working for others. Other historians maintain that the consolidation not only provided the benefit of increased food production, but that it did not significantly increase the proportion of landless laborers dependent on

farming. While acknowledging that the rate of enclosure increased in the second half of the century, they note that much land had already been consolidated as early as the sixteenth century, when sheep pastures were enclosed in response to the increasing demand for wool in textile production. The number of small independent peasant farmers simply continued to decline in the eighteenth century.

What perhaps can be said is that the changes constituted a slow process of commercialization of agriculture in England and Scotland. Increasingly, large landowners held most of the agricultural property, leasing the land to tenant farmers who produced for cash markets and relied on landless laborers for their workforce. More production was estate based and market oriented to maximize profits. Many peasant farmers became landless rural wage earners; however, the countryside was not depopulated, nor were large numbers forced into towns. Nonetheless, traditional communities and existing social patterns were disrupted, producing a degree of unrest. Protests escalated to riots in some areas, and Parliament responded by passing the Waltham Black Act in 1723. This legislation created new categories of crime, which allowed for conviction of individuals who appeared to have suspicious intent while in forests or enclosed lands. Landlords used their political power to ensure the security of their productive estates.

Although the early efforts and inspiration for agricultural change are usually traced to the Netherlands, reforms elsewhere on the continent were slow and minimal. In France much was published about new farming techniques, including articles in *l'Encyclopédie*. However, ideas tended to remain matters for discussion rather than implementation. As Young noted in his observations, traditional practices predominated into the 1780s. Further to the East, limited improvements occurred in production by increasing the amount of land under cultivation. As the emphasis shifted to profit-oriented agriculture in eastern Europe, landlords tended to place greater pressure on tenants and serfs rather than modify existing technology to improve productivity.

## Population and Production

The slowly expanding food supply, which resulted from farming innovations, contributed to the growth of the European population in the eighteenth century. Population increases alternating with periods of stability and even decline had characterized the uneven demographic pattern in previous centuries. However, in the eighteenth century the increase from about 120 million to 190 million was noticeable, even if the statistics were unavailable

at the time. Thomas Malthus (1766–1834) in his *Essay on the Principle of Population* extrapolated from limited empirical evidence that an increasing food supply was responsible for the population growth. However, since the food supply grew arithmetically while the population multiplied exponentially, famine was a natural check on population. Other factors, Malthus noted, were plague and disease, war, and infant mortality. Subsequently, with more complete data available, it became apparent that he was describing conditions that more appropriately applied to earlier centuries. The diminishing impact of these Malthusian death-rate factors was allowing the population to increase. The gradual disappearance of the bubonic plague in Europe was a critical component and largely a consequence of chance: the black rat, which carried the flea that transmitted the bacillus to humans, was driven out by a competing brown rat for unknown reasons. Other factors that reduced disease and epidemic were improvements in water supply and sewage in towns and the drainage of marshes and swamps. The former reduced the incidence of typhoid and typhus, while the latter reduced insect populations that transmitted disease. The nature of warfare changed as more professional armies employed strategies with less impact on civilian populations. The result was a reduction in casualties and fewer epidemics. These, in addition to an increasing food supply, contributed to population growth as the death rate declined, while the birth rate remained unchanged. What Malthus could not have predicted, rendering his view quite pessimistic, was the vast increase in productivity that was to take place with the mechanization of agriculture. This provided a food supply that more than kept pace with population growth.

Population increases and agricultural transformation contributed to another economic development during the nineteenth century: the growth of industry in rural areas. Although based on agriculture, peasant communities had always produced some manufactured goods on a small scale, primarily out of necessity. Large-scale handicraft production was controlled by craft guilds and merchants in urban centers, who regulated production and distribution by means of monopolies. In the eighteenth century, the rural poor, seeking to supplement meager farming incomes, provided an opportunity for urban textile merchants to bypass the control of guilds. Under the putting-out system (also called domestic or cottage industry), textile merchants contracted with peasants to spin and weave finished products from unfinished fibers. The merchants then sold the goods and paid the workers. Various arrangements between merchant capitalists and rural workers appeared in England and then spread gradually and unevenly across western

and central Europe. Sometimes spinners and weavers worked independently, obtaining their own materials and equipment, but merchants were usually in a better position to acquire raw materials and purchase machinery. Whatever the relationship between capitalist and worker, this unregulated form of production outside the jurisdiction of urban guilds provided essential earnings for rural families. Frequently, the work was apportioned among men, women, and children so that all contributed to the family enterprise. Although textiles predominated, other goods such as various housewares or even luxury items for the wealthy were produced.

The introduction of technological inventions, commonly associated with the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution, began to transform the process before the end of the century. John Kay (1704–1764) invented the flying shuttle in the 1730s, and its introduction into the industry after 1750 created a production bottleneck. This invention increased the speed of loom operation and the productivity of weavers. The imbalance was addressed in the 1760s when James Hargreaves developed the spinning jenny, which allowed simultaneous spinning initially of sixteen and then of increasing numbers of spindles of thread. Acquisition of the new equipment increased capital costs, but they continued to be operated on a cottage basis or sometimes in small rural workshops. In the last decades of the eighteenth century, cotton textile manufacturing began to move from the cottage to the factory, following the invention of the water frame by Richard Arkwright (1732–1792), which allowed the use of waterpower to drive spinning frames. The imbalance shifted in favor of spinning with the development of the spinning mule by Samuel Compton. Now the demand was for faster weaving, a need filled by Edward Cartwright's water-powered loom in 1785. Since these processes now had to be located by streams, the initial factories remained part of the rural landscape, close to the source of cheap labor.

During the eighteenth century, the continent remained predominantly rural, with less than 20 percent of the European population living in urban centers. Although the urban population was now growing more rapidly than its rural counterpart, towns and cities were not yet the sites of factories or large manufacturing enterprises. Cities and towns could be divided into two general categories. The most common were regional towns, which served as the seat of provincial administration and as market centers where area goods were exchanged. Population varied, with the average center having fewer than 60,000 people. The second category included the seaboard and river ports, which were large commercial centers and national capitals. The latter were the largest, with London reaching a population of one million by 1780, Paris over half a million, and Berlin just under 200,000.



Relationships between town and country were intimate and complex. Dependent on the surrounding region for much of their food supply, towns shared the crises of shortages with their rural neighbors, although urban authorities attempted to keep adequate supplies of grain in reserve against the threat of famine. The livelihood of many in the towns depended on the processing and distribution of agricultural products. Nobility who owned large tracts of land maintained residences in urban centers and frequently owned income property there as well. Wealthy middle-class town dwellers were landlords of nearby farmers. Not only did the merchant capitalists engage in cottage industry venture into the countryside, but so did many rural day laborers who lived in town and traveled daily to work. As the century progressed, there was the continued movement of men and women to the towns seeking employment as servants or hoping to learn a trade.

The small elite at the top of the urban social structure usually included members of the nobility and the clergy, government officials, and the wealthiest merchants, bankers, and financiers. They dominated the economic affairs of the towns and controlled political life through the monopolies they held on municipal positions. The group traditionally regarded as middle class, or bourgeois, consisted of the less-prosperous merchants, bankers, independent tradesmen, and professional people. Members of this segment of society were an increasingly dynamic feature of eighteenth-century town life. The European economy was expanding. The impact of increased output from agriculture, cottage industry, and urban workshops placed greater demands on banks to provide capital and credit. The flow of trade within Europe accelerated, and global trade, particularly transatlantic commerce, was becoming more important. The enhanced activity raised the profits of people engaged in banking, insurance, investment, and the law. Understandably, these middle-class citizens chafed at the restrictions imposed by mercantilist programs and aristocratic privilege, demanding in their place more rational economic policies and access to power and prestige.

In addition to the urban elite and the middle class, a third category comprised the largest and most diverse socioeconomic segment of the urban population: the journeymen and craftsmen, shopkeepers and diverse wage earners (laborers), as well as the vagrants and the city poor. In many cases, the artisans, as the skilled tradesmen were called, continued to use guild organizations to control entry into crafts and training for members from apprentice through journeyman to master. Guilds also assisted members in time of family need and protected them against the economic threats posed by the encroachments of the commercial market. In guild economics, the

value of a product was determined by the “just price,” not by the fluctuating interactions of supply and demand.

Objections to price increases were a common occurrence. In the most severe cases, protests turned into riots when the price of bread or other food essentials increased in response to merchants’ attempts to take advantage of market opportunities. Diverse groups within this third category, unable to earn enough to pay for bread and other necessities, responded by confiscating bread or grain and selling them at just prices to the crowds. These bread or food riots, like the peasant revolts in the countryside, were efforts by the poor to retain stability in an economy in which daily life was a constant struggle for subsistence in the face of scarcity.

## SOCIETY AND POLITICS

Domestic politics in the early years of the eighteenth century were marked by monarchical succession crises in major countries, including France, Britain, and Prussia, while internationally, the treaties of Utrecht (1713) and Rys-taadt (1714) signaled the conclusion of conflicts referred to as the War of the Spanish Succession (see chapter 2). The later stages of the century witnessed further uncertainties as the American colonies gained their independence from Britain and the consequences of revolution in France were felt far beyond the borders of that country (see chapter 2).

Despite the convenience of these chronological markers, generalizations that apply to the political status of all European states are difficult to formulate; however, it can be stated with assurance that during the eighteenth century, the major countries of Europe did not yet constitute nation-states. A process of centralization had been well underway in the previous century, and with the exception of Britain, greater power was now concentrated in the hands of the monarchy. In most countries the monarchy and the state were still synonymous. The justification for absolutist royal authority was, however, shifting from the theory of divine right to more utilitarian considerations. The need for an administration more effective in collecting revenue, building professional armies, and maintaining peace and security increasingly provided the impetus and rationale for monarchical state authority. Many of the arguments came from the philosophes, who subjected the state to harsh scrutiny, but whose distrust of the masses led them to call for strong rulers as the only hope for implementing reforms. This increasing consolidation of power undermined, but did not destroy, the aristocracy. The insti-

tution of the monarchy gained in strength on the continent, but the nobility continued to retain nonpolitical privileges and to exercise strong political influence on the ruler and the court. In the relative peace of the quarter century following the Treaty of Utrecht, domestic, social, and economic factors came to the fore, placing stress on the existing political structures. As a result, a variety of political paths emerged.

## France

In France, which was regarded as the model for absolutism, the authority of Louis XIV, the Sun King, passed to his five-year-old great grandson, who reigned as Louis XV (r. 1715–1774). Within two years, his elder cousin, Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, had consolidated his position as regent at the cost of sharing power with the aristocracy. The regent initially attempted to work through committees of noblemen, but these were abandoned, and the nobility began to reassert some traditional authority through the old *parlements*, which had been silenced by Louis XIV. In particular, the Parlement of Paris led the way in regaining the authority to assent to royal edicts prior to their implementation. Thus, an aristocratic resurgence began as the more privileged groups in society sought to check the absolutist power of the monarchy.

In addition to this political ferment, economic problems arose. France, like other nations in that postwar period, had to contend with a large public debt and a troubled economy. Under the mercantilist principles of the time, government financial policies and private entrepreneurship were closely linked. In France, the two came together in a program formulated by John Law, a Scottish financier, mathematician, and gambling partner of the regent. Law established a French central bank and then also organized a monopoly trading company, popularly called the Mississippi Company, for trade with Louisiana. This company soon extended its control beyond its initial jurisdiction of Louisiana to encompass all French colonial trade. The next step in the project, with the regent's approval, was to have the company assume the entire government debt. Individuals possessing certificates of royal indebtedness could exchange them for shares of company stock. The company's profits would be used to retire the debt. A flurry of speculative purchasing of stock raised prices; however, it also generated investment concerns when investors began to sell stocks and attempted to obtain gold for currency from the new central bank, which did not have sufficient gold to redeem all the money presented. Gold payments were halted, many suffered

severe losses in savings, and Law fled the country. This financial debacle came to be known as the Mississippi Bubble. Not only were the regent and John Law discredited, but suspicion of royal authority was widespread and attempts to impose financial reform were increased.

Following the resignation of the Duc d'Orleans, Cardinal Fleury, chief minister, provided stable political leadership and economic policies, which solved some of the financial problems. Louis XV finally assumed personal control of the government when Fleury died in 1743. It is a measure of the king's lack of dedication and his mediocre skills that his period of rule is better known for the presence, tastes, and foibles of his mistress, Madame de Pompadour. However, personal failings were not solely responsible for, but augmented, the problems and obstacles that plagued the regime.

This can be seen in the revenue problems of the French government. Some revenue was derived from the sale of offices and privileges, but the main source of government funds was the *taille*, a tax on property. The burden of this direct tax, variously applied according to location, fell almost entirely on peasants, because, for the most part, the nobles were exempted by law and the bourgeois property owners were generally able to obtain exemptions. Church property was not taxable, but the monarch was accorded a periodic gift, or *don*, in place of payment. A system in which the privileged classes were able to enjoy prosperity while the government constantly sought revenue was inherently unstable and was viewed as such by many officials. In 1726 an attempt to introduce a poll (head) tax, which would have required an assessment proportional to income, failed. A further effort in the 1740s to impose a 5 percent tax, the *vingtième*, on income from all forms of property, fell victim to the *parlements*, who ruled that such unilateral actions were contrary to the fundamental laws of France. The aristocratic members of the *parlements* put Montesquieu's arguments to use. In the early 1770s, Louis XV's first minister, René-Nicolas de Maupeou (1714–1792), replaced the existing *parlements* with new ones with limited authority. This move, along with proposals for further administrative and judicial reform, was applauded by people who, like Voltaire, were constantly struggling to obtain a fairer society. However, another attempt at tax reform ended when Louis XV was succeeded by his grandson, Louis XVI, in 1774. Louis XVI (r. 1774–1793) was twenty years old when he ascended the throne, and in an attempt to secure the support of the nobility, he restored the power of the *parlements*, which had been suspended by Louis XIV. To his credit, the new king, who had good intentions, but was of a weak nature, appointed a physiocrat, Robert-Jacques Turgot (1727–1781), as finance minister. Some of

Turgot's reforms included restricting guilds and implementing a freer grain trade. These were accepted, but his plans to replace the *corvée* with a money tax applicable to all classes, along with a general tax-policy review, incurred an immediate strong opposition from the Parlement of Paris, the church, and the provincial estates, precipitating his resignation. Therefore, in France, the cradle of enlightened political thought, the institutions that supposedly worked toward balance and reform instead served to bring about stalemate and tension.

## Britain

Britain, too, underwent a succession crisis early in the eighteenth century as the last Stuart, Anne (1665–1714), died without an heir and the throne passed to George I (1660–1727) of the House of Hanover. In this instance, simple succession by lineage was not the case. The Act of Settlement passed by Parliament in 1701 ensured that only Protestants could succeed to the throne. In direct contrast to French absolutism, a number of events had occurred in Britain, particularly the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which had taken the country along the path of constitutionalism, limiting the powers of the monarchy with an elected, effective parliament. However, this was not yet a modern democracy with entrenched rights and institutions following clearly defined roles. Development over the next few decades began to shape some of these institutions, including political parties, the cabinet, and the office of prime minister.

The new Hanoverian ruler was not unanimously accepted in his new kingdom. Some claimed that a son of James II, the Catholic Stuart king who had been deposed in 1688, was the legitimate heir to the throne. An uprising by his supporters, Jacobites, in Scotland was quickly suppressed by troops loyal to George I. Neither this monarch nor his successor George II (r. 1727–1760) was proficient in English, and both tended to show greater concern for their continental possessions than for British interests. These factors contributed to the growth in parliamentary authority and the increasing importance of royal ministers.

A financial scandal similar to that of the Mississippi Bubble in France aided the rise of Sir Robert Walpole (1676–1745) to political prominence as a royal minister. In a project similar to John Law's plan, the South Sea Company assumed a large portion of England's public debt by receiving government bonds in return for shares in the company. In anticipation of profits to be made by the company in Spanish America, the demand for company

stock rose rapidly. However, when stockholders began to doubt the viability and promises of the company and various similar speculative enterprises that had developed, a market value crash precipitated losses of savings and inheritances. In the aftermath, Walpole, who had been critical of the scheme, became principal minister to George I. Although the major participants were temporarily discredited, Walpole's actions in Parliament saved and gradually reformed England's financial institutions.

England's more successful recovery from her bubble crisis is attributable more to the effectiveness of parliamentary government by the middle of the eighteenth century than to the work of a single individual. The government debt in England was regarded as a national responsibility. None of it was repudiated, as had occurred in France, and there was a willingness to levy and collect taxes from all propertied people. All landowners paid a share of the tax because it was through Parliament, which they controlled, that policies could be effectively influenced or determined. The consent of the gentry, even if not enthusiastic, could be obtained when the national good and self-interest coincided, as they did in matters of economic strength. The elite that ruled Britain was made up of all those who had large land holdings, whether they were noble or not. Gentry status at the beginning of the century was claimed by about 4,000 families who, by the end of the century, owned about 25 percent of the land. Since only the eldest could inherit the father's land and title, the younger sons sought careers and income elsewhere. Thus, higher positions within the Church of England came to be held mostly by sons of the nobility. Increasingly, economic opportunities were to be found in alliances with urban commercial interests. The resulting relationships with the rising middle class created a group known as the "funded gentry." Seats in the House of Lords were reserved for the titled nobility and bishops of the Anglican Church, while the House of Commons was the preserve of members of the landed and funded gentry. This ruling elite, however, did not speak with a single voice. Two collections of interest groups labeled Whig and Tory defined alternate political paths. They were far from disciplined political parties with consistent policies and are best regarded as shifting factions whose differences varied in accordance with the circumstances and issues involved.

The electoral system, which determined seats in the House of Commons, was not representative of the general population in numbers or opinion. The approximately 500 members of the House of Commons were elected from historic counties and boroughs (districts) in which voting practices varied, but wherein the franchise, restricted to males, was determined by ownership

of property and compromised by patronage, bribery, and corruption. In many instances wealthy members could assure their reelection through patronage. In “rotten” boroughs a single landowner purchased all the land that entailed voting rights. This produced situations like the infamous “Old Sarum,” which had no inhabitants, but sent two members to the Commons. Another borough, which had been under water for some time, was also represented. In addition, there were many pocket boroughs where elections remained uncontested or never doubted for the same reasons. At the same time, many of the growing industrial towns, such as Manchester and Birmingham, remained without representation.

From this unstable, unsatisfactory, and unjust situation, there emerged new institutions: the office of prime minister, political parties, and the concept of opposition. The king’s first minister, Robert Walpole, is sometimes regarded as England’s first prime minister, but the position did not formally exist in the eighteenth century. Walpole emerged from the scandal of the South Sea Bubble to gain prominence and respectability. The king’s unfamiliarity with the English language, the political environment, and Walpole’s effective use of patronage served not only the interests of the Whig factions for which Walpole spoke, but also increased the importance of his position as the king’s primary adviser. He was instrumental in defining British policies for twenty years and was succeeded by a fellow Whig, William Pitt (1708–1778), “the Great Commoner,” who came to power in the 1760s. The king had come to depend on the ability of a minister sitting in the House of Commons to guide the legislative agenda and gain support for executive policies in the lower chamber. When George III (r. 1760–1820) assumed the throne, it appeared that he wished to rule without consultation with Parliament and to create a government above the factions and groupings in the legislative body. To this end, he appointed a chief minister who was not a member of Parliament. This action gave impetus to the development of clear ideological distinctions in the Commons, as the Whigs strongly protested the king’s persistence in asserting the independence of the monarch. Whigs viewed themselves as defenders of parliamentary rights and even began to use the term *party* to distinguish themselves from the Tories, whom they claimed gave unquestioning support to the monarchy. The Tories, of course, denied this, but nevertheless were associated with the prerogatives of the throne. Out of these disputes, the embryonic concept of the political party began to take shape, along with the concept of ministerial responsibility, which required members of the Crown to be chosen from Parliament. In addition,

the idea of parliamentary opposition took hold, which allowed members to be loyal to the Crown, yet disagree with and criticize the government. The gradual emergence of a new relationship between the monarchy and Parliament is evident in Pitt's resignation and subsequent return to power. King George had come to rely upon him to provide national political leadership.

Not all of the political activity of the day was within the confines of the formal institutions or the theoretical commentary provided by the Enlightenment. Public protest concerning government policies occurred in opposition to Walpole's proposed excise tax in 1733 and in other subsequent controversies. As the reading public expanded, the demand for systematic reform arose, and in the 1760s opinion coalesced around the controversial figure of John Wilkes, a middle-class member of Parliament arrested when he attacked the government ministers and the king in his newspaper, the *North Briton*. Wilkes regarded his arrest as an arbitrary act of government that violated the principles of English liberty. Although subsequently freed from jail, Wilkes feared further action and fled to France. When he returned he was immediately rearrested, being in the eyes of the king "that devil Wilkes," but for thousands of common people and dozens of reformers "Wilkes and liberty" became a battle cry. Although convicted, he was released due to public protests and demonstrations, but Parliament did not allow him to take another seat despite a number of reelections.

Reformers' demands came to include annual meetings of Parliament, residency requirements for members of Parliament, publication of parliamentary debates, and greater freedom of the press. The increase in daily newspapers in major cities and provincial towns and the spread of political ideas through literary and political clubs, salons, coffeehouses, and taverns not only spread ideas of reform, but helped to extend political life and culture far beyond the traditional political arena. Although some minor adjustments occurred in response to popular concerns, such as in the abuses of patronage, the landed ruling class still maintained its privileged political position to the end of the century.

### **Continental Variations**

Political engagement, which involved reform from above and demands from below occurred in most other European countries as well. The United Netherlands (Dutch Republic) had tended to alternate between periods of centralization and local autonomy owing to its unique political structure.



The regents of Dutch towns defended republican federalism in the Estates General in opposition to the House of Orange, which exercised national executive power through the *stadholder* office. This position was left vacant during the first part of the century, as the local oligarchies sought to reduce the centralizing power. But by midcentury some middle-class merchants, shopkeepers, and artisans, demanding democratic reforms, formed a radical Patriot Party, which threatened existing political power. With assistance from a foreign power, Prussia, the regents and House of Orange reestablished the old system, which combined the tension of monarchical executive power with provincial authority.

On the Iberian peninsula, Spain entered the century with a dynastic change as the Bourbons of France replaced the Spanish Habsburgs in accordance with the Treaty of Utrecht. The change seems to have provided Spain with a rejuvenated monarchy, as the Bourbon rulers, Ferdinand VI (r. 1746–1759) and then Charles III (r. 1759–1788), asserted their authority in relation to the nobility through administrative reforms and curtailing the powers of the church. The Inquisition was limited but not abolished, and the Jesuits were expelled from the country. In the second half of the century, additional policy changes resulted in tax reforms, the encouragement of industry, and a revision of the school system. In neighboring Portugal, significant reforms occurred at midcentury during a time when the Marquis of Pombal served as chief minister. He curbed the Inquisition, placed the property of the Jesuits under state control, and expelled them from Portugal and its territories. In pursuit of economic revival and modernization, the tax structure was reorganized, a new school system introduced, and efforts at a general modernization were initiated. In the Iberian states, where there existed a cautious admiration for enlightened administrative thought, reform was implemented in an authoritarian manner by regimes attempting to consolidate monarchical power and centralize the administration of government.

In the northern corner of Europe, Sweden, while losing prestige on the international scene, experienced an aristocratic resurgence early in the century. However, factional disputes enabled Gustavus III (r. 1771–1792) to reassert the power of the monarchy. During his reign a number of reforms were implemented by decree that reflected fundamental Enlightenment values. Gustavus established freedom of speech, religion, and the press and instituted a system of justice that eliminated the use of torture. His economic policies reflected *laissez-faire* principles, as he reduced tariffs, abolished tolls, and encouraged trade and agriculture. Other legislation made judges permanent and protected the rights of the accused. To protect his reforms

and in his determination to pursue both his domestic and foreign policies, Gustavus imposed a new constitution, which gave him virtually absolute powers. The opposition and outrage of the nobility led to his assassination by a masked aristocrat at a masquerade ball in 1792.

By 1700, the Hohenzollern family of Brandenburg had fashioned the state of Prussia from an inherited collection of north German possessions. Frederick William I (r. 1713–1740), intensely attached to military values, created the best army in Europe and entrenched absolutist rule in his country. The king's devotion to the military expressed itself in his own highly disciplined personal life, which dictated that he always appear in an army uniform, maintain a rigid schedule, and impose specific standards on all subordinates. He organized an entire regiment of tall grenadiers (over six feet), recruiting them throughout Europe, and even resorted to kidnapping men who met the criteria for this special, imposing troop. His most impressive achievement was the expansion of the regular standing army, which he more than doubled in size to over 80,000 during his reign, making it the fourth largest land force in Europe. This highly skilled and disciplined force made Prussia a major military power, despite its limited economic resources.

The second institution that gave Prussia its strength was a highly centralized administrative apparatus supervised by the General Directory, a central government agency. Charged with the responsibility for overseeing the domestic affairs of state, it maintained an efficient bureaucracy of civil servants that consistently and rigidly applied a common framework of policing, economy, and finance on Prussia's varied territories. The combined authority of army and bureaucracy reinforced an already rigid class structure. The landed aristocracy, or Junker class, monopolized the officer corps of the army, while peasants, being accorded very few rights, spent their lives as serfs and soldiers. The middle class could only aspire to social prestige through loyal service in the bureaucracy. Such focused attention on military matters and state values gave rise to the conventional image of Prussian militarism.

The reign of Frederick the Great (II) (r. 1740–1786) brought a continuation of policies, combined with some administrative reforms. A well-educated monarch familiar with Enlightenment thought who played host to Voltaire, Frederick introduced judicial reforms that unified the legal code, limited the use of torture, and provided some freedom of speech and of the press, as well as full religious tolerance. At the same time, he reinforced the hierarchical structure of Prussian society by excluding all but the nobility from the highest positions in the bureaucracy, thereby binding the interests of the landed aristocracy even more closely to those of the state. In military

affairs, he extended the policies of his predecessors by further enlarging the force to 200,000 men. His willingness to use this force and the efficiency of the state bureaucracy placed Prussia among the great European powers by the latter part of the eighteenth century.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Austrian Empire had emerged in central and southeastern Europe under the Habsburg dynasty. In addition to the traditional Austrian provinces, Bohemia had been incorporated during the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648). Hungary was added as Ottoman power was successfully challenged. Unlike Prussia, the Austrian Empire did not develop as a centralized state; rather, the Habsburg emperor held together the various possessions through his position as archduke of Austria, king of Bohemia, and king of Hungary. The treaties following the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714) added the Spanish Netherlands and former Spanish possessions in Italy to the empire, making Austria a state of considerable potential strength.

However, it remained a collection of territories held together by a dynastic union. Landed aristocrats throughout the empire tended to form the officer corps and hold bureaucratic positions, but there were few other common institutional bonds. Under circumstances of extensive linguistic, cultural, and even religious diversity, the Habsburg rulers had to devote considerable energy and domestic policy to maintaining political unity. To this end, agreements with the nobility of the varied territories, continued recognition and maintenance of regional estates, and the persistence of local laws took precedence over establishing a common legal code and a centralized administration.

Empress Maria Theresa (r. 1740–1780) initiated a reform program to strengthen the Habsburg empire. Administrative changes subjected Bohemia and Austrian possessions to a central bureaucracy. Provincial diets, local committees, and chancelleries made up of landed aristocrats were replaced with salaried officials responsible to Vienna; however, Hungary, the Austrian Netherlands, and the Italian possessions were excluded. Policies to increase the empire's economic strength were based in large part on the central-European mercantilist doctrine. Tax collection came under the jurisdiction of royal officials making it difficult for clergy and nobility to avoid payment. Guild monopolies were checked, and effective policing made movement on the roads less hazardous. Internal tariffs were reduced, particularly benefiting the slowly growing cotton manufacturing industry in Bohemia. Maria Theresa initiated reforms to the traditional institution of serfdom from a combination of humane and economic motives. Laws were

introduced to check the direct abuse of peasants, regularize labor obligations, and limit the taxes and services required of them. This direct intervention also made more men available for military services as the army was enlarged and modernized. Remaining a devout Catholic, Maria Theresa also limited the power and influence of the church. She not only imposed heavier taxes and confiscated some monastic properties, but also expelled the Jesuits.

Her son and successor and coregent for the last fifteen years of her life, Joseph II (r. 1780–1790), extended these reforms far beyond the limits approved by his mother. Joseph's impatience and determination produced 6,000 decrees and 11,000 laws in his ten-year reign. "The state," said Joseph, "must ensure the greatest good for the greatest number." While not holding the philosophes in high regard, he nonetheless exemplified some of the basic principles and values of the Enlightenment. He sought to create a uniform and rational empire guided by a centralized state. Remaining measures of regional and local self-government were swept away, and a single administrative structure was imposed, even in Hungary. The bureaucracy was modernized with training courses for officials, promotion schedules, and efficiency reports. German became the language of the administration.

Joseph went far beyond the regulation of serfdom, retaining only a few elements, like the *robot*. Subsequently, he attempted to effect its complete abolition and to introduce a single land tax. The latter measure had to be withdrawn due to strong opposition not only from the nobility, but from the peasants as well. The peasants lacked the money to make payments and resented the changes in traditional agricultural practices that would be required; the nobility objected to the loss of power, revenue, and status imposed by equality of taxation. Justice, too, was to meet the criteria of equality, and many of Cesare Beccaria's proposals were implemented. Equal punishment for equal crimes was instituted, so that aristocrats were subject to the pillory and to street sweeping, as were common criminals. Other aspects of Beccaria's program were introduced to abolish torture and to make physical punishment less cruel in general.

In religious reforms, Joseph exceeded the initiatives taken by Maria Theresa. He introduced an edict that granted Protestants (Calvinists and Lutherans) and Orthodox Christians legal equality and the right to receive education, enter professions, and worship privately. Similar rights were also accorded to the Jews, making the Austrian Empire the first European state to introduce such a law. The principle of tolerance was certainly a motive, but practical considerations also played a role, as Joseph believed it would en-

courage immigration, enhance economic development, and increase social harmony. Other aspects of Joseph's religious policies centered on practices within the Catholic Church, which he deemed superstitious or unnecessary, as well as on the controversial issue of church-state relations. He supported Febronianism, a movement that proposed more national independence of German bishops from Papal authority. He reduced the authority of the church in the Austrian Empire by removing its capacity to censor and close monasteries, confiscating property, abolishing tithes, and making priests salaried civil servants.

It is perhaps in social and educational reform that Joseph's goal of ensuring that "the state [provide] the greatest good for the greatest number" was advanced. Money obtained from the dissolution of monasteries was used to fund orphanages, hospitals, maternity facilities, and medical schools, as well as institutions for illegitimate children, unmarried mothers, and those with various physical disabilities. Children of primary-school age were required to attend state-operated schools. Secular teachers were trained and instruction was delivered in the local language with the intent of providing a practical education. The most able boys would become civil servants, and the remainder would be farmers or soldiers. Girls received training only in domestic skills, but any provision at all for state schools for girls was unique in Europe at this time.

Despite his good intentions, Joseph's reforms were strongly opposed. The aristocracy and church resisted. Fears of assimilation were aroused among the religious minorities, and peasants perceived threats to cherished institutions and practices. In the final years of his reign, Joseph implemented the features of a police state to force compliance with his reforms and consequently had to contend with rural uprisings. He moderated some of his reforms, and his brother and successor, Leopold II (r. 1790–1792), while personally supporting the changes, faced increasing opposition. During the reign of Francis II (r. 1792–1835), most of Joseph's efforts were undone.

Russia entered the eighteenth century under the rule of Peter the Great (r. 1682–1725). Determined that Russia was to play a major part in eastern Europe, Peter introduced reforms to modernize the army, centralize administration, and promote economic development. Although he co-ruled with his half-brother, Ivan, until the latter's death in 1696, Peter dominated the government after 1689, at which time his followers overthrew his older sister, Sophie, who was serving as regent. He had long admired or been fascinated by aspects of European culture, which he encountered in the foreign suburbs of Moscow, and in 1697 the physically imposing tsar (he was about

seven feet tall) made his famous tour of Europe, frequently attempting to use ineffective disguises. Peter was most fascinated with the practical aspects of European society, those that could be copied, imported, or adapted from abroad to make Russia a great power.

He borrowed from Western practices in reorganizing the central government and consolidating power in his own hands. The landholding class, or *boyars*, who had played a major role in succession and governing through consultative bodies, were no longer summoned. In place of individual ministers, administrative bureaus or colleges were given responsibility for departments such as justice, foreign affairs, and war. All noblemen were required to serve either in the army or civil service for life. In 1722 Peter established a table of ranks for civil offices, which allowed non-nobles to serve the state and achieve noble status. Similar opportunities were available in the military. By requiring all to start at the bottom and work their way up, the old nobility was tamed, and the new nobility rose on the basis of merit. However, after his death, the new upper class, becoming hereditary itself, merged with the old.

State control of the Russian Orthodox Church was achieved when Peter abolished the traditional position of patriarch and established a holy synod to rule in his place. The head of the synod was a layman through whom Peter was able to ensure that the interests of the state remained paramount. Peter's reforms placed demands on the lives of Russia's peasantry. A regular standing army of more than 200,000 men was created, consisting mainly of peasants, who were drafted for twenty-five years. The peasantry also bore the brunt of the cost, as taxes were more than tripled during Peter's reign and individuals, or "souls," became the main unit of taxation. Other aspects of Peter's economic reforms extended serfdom as an institution. While capable young Russians were required to attend schools or go abroad to acquire technical and managerial skills, serfs provided the "unfree labor" for early steps in industrial development. Serfs could now be sold without land or moved from agricultural tasks into mines or factories. Mercantilist policies, which protected and encouraged Russian economic development, went hand in hand with a more oppressive serfdom.

The vast majority of government revenue and efforts were expended in almost constant warfare during Peter's reign. The most significant of the modest territorial gains came with the victory over Sweden at the end of the Great Northern War (1700–1721). With the acquisition of present day Estonia and much of Latvia, Russia was not only dominant in the Baltic region, but became as well a European power. In 1703 Peter had already begun his ambi-

tious project of constructing a new city, St. Petersburg, which was to be his “window to the West.” Peter has for a long time been labeled as a Westernizer owing to the nature of the changes he introduced in Russia. Whether his intention was modernization or simply power for Russia and absolutism for the tsar remains debatable. His policies not only built a window, but also opened a door through which foreigners and ideas flowed. Customs and manners forced upon Russia’s elite by Peter included shaving heads and shortening coats in accord with Western practices. Etiquette now prohibited spitting on the floor or scratching oneself during dinner. Aristocratic women



1.7. An equestrian portrait of Catherine the Great in military regalia by Vigilius Erichsen (Giraudon/Art Resource, New York)

could now remove their traditional veils and mix socially with men. Although aristocratic reaction undid some of his work, these developments contributed to further changes later in the century during the reign of Catherine the Great.

Peter's commitment to Westernization was so extreme that he had his eldest son beheaded for opposing it. Following Peter's death in 1725, the palace guard, which he had attempted to curtail, proved instrumental in determining who was to reign. When his successor, Peter III, was murdered in 1762, stability returned to the government with the accession of Catherine II (r. 1762–1796), a German princess, whose mother's relationship to the Romanovs had provided her the opportunity to marry into the Russian court. Known as Catherine the Great, she proved an intelligent and determined person and an industrious and able ruler. She had read extensively in literature of the Enlightenment and began her reign determined to rule in a manner that was enlightened and that would Westernize and modernize the country. She was very willing to import Western talent and ideas to Russia. In 1767 she summoned a consultative assembly called a legislative commission for which she wrote a set of instructions drawing upon the ideas of the philosophes who had anticipated the implementation of enlightened reforms. In her guidelines to the commission, Catherine questioned serfdom, capital punishment, and torture and raised the possibility of legal equality. Some reforms in education were introduced, but ultimately no new legal code was produced, and the deliberations of the commission were inconclusive. Catherine disbanded it within eighteen months, and subsequent policies were reactionary in nature, to the great disappointment of those who had been anticipating more enlightened measures. These policies strengthened the landholding class at the expense of the Russian serfs. A program of administrative reorganization, which divided Russia into fifty provinces, each further subdivided into districts, placed power in the hands of the local nobility. In addition, the gentry received special legal privileges, including exemption from personal taxation and corporal punishment. Peasant resentment and unrest culminated in the massive Pugachev rebellion, which swept across southern Russia in 1773. After its brutal suppression, all rural reform efforts ceased, the nobility regained absolute control over serfs, and serfdom actually expanded to newer parts of the empire. In 1785, a *Charter of the Nobility* formalized the special social and legal status of the aristocracy in Russia.

The efforts at “reform from above” as attempted by various eighteenth-century rulers, particularly the prominent central and eastern European



monarchs, gave rise to considerable debate at the time and to subsequent historical controversy. During the period, political theorists recognized the contradiction inherent in the idea of an enlightened despot. The ideal of individual rights and liberties seemed to be violated by the presence of unlimited power in the hands of a hereditary monarch. However, many accepted the latter because they believed the general populace to be in need of humanitarian and utilitarian reforms, such as literacy and rational governance, even against their immediate wishes. The long-range goals of the individual and society would be served. Thus, Frederick the Great, Joseph II, and Catherine the Great were initially applauded by Voltaire and Diderot, but as the eighteenth century progressed, most philosophes supported limitations on the monarchy. By the nineteenth century, when the term *enlightened despotism* was coined, many believed that the major absolutist rulers had introduced dramatic changes based on Enlightenment principles. Some historians regard the practical result as modest and question the sincerity of the monarchs, whereas others emphasize the difficulty of the task given the entrenched interests of the powerful nobilities. More recently, an interpretation has emerged stressing that the reforms gave priority to the utilitarian needs of state building over humanitarian social concerns. State power was best served by administrative reorganization and military strength, but the welfare of the state was also served by reforms that introduced practical education, made uniform legal codes, and provided for tolerance of minorities. It is certain that the monarchies of Europe worked to change the social, political, and economic realities of their realms in the years between the close of the Seven Years' War and the upheaval of the French Revolution and that they did so in the Enlightenment spirit of innovation.

## NOTES

1. Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982).
2. Robin Winks et al., *A History of Civilization: Prehistory to the Present*, 7th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1988), 479.
3. As quoted in Henry Vyverberg, *The Living Tradition*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1988), 33.