

The enlightenment narrative essay

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The Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment was a shift in interest and view of the universe between 1540 and 1700.

People were after the intellectual physical world. This movement took place mostly in France. It emphasized reason, intellectual freedom and social/political activity. It sought to use the scientific method and reason to perfect society by way of science. It valued individualism, rationalism and relativism.

Thinkers came a long way from the Medieval ways of thinking to the Enlightened ways. The Bible, scholarship of thinkers and ancient Greeks/Romans were the main sources for knowledge for the Medieval people. The Church played a large role in education. The idea that Geocentrisim was true, versus Heliocentrisim, was unacceptable according to the Church. The Church tried to maintain power, but nevertheless, people sought after their earthly lives, and not their heavenly ones. Galileo discovered that the law of falling bodies, was in fact, a universal law.

The idea that any law applied to all existence suggested that if all of these universal laws were discovered and followed that a utopia could be achieved. Francis Bacon wrote New Atlantis on this idea. Bacon also developed an inductive reasoning process that lead into reason being the basis for all things. Using reason, people began to see that superstitions had no logical basis and therefore were null and void. Andreas Vesalius and William Harvey helped to show that the Medieval ideas about how the body worked were not true, either.

Discovery and Reason helped to pull the Medieval world into the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment philosopher's had two basic theories about the way people should be governed. These theories are based on the inborn nature of man. In 1650, Hobbes said that human nature is inherently evil. Humans are warlike and vicious.

They need to be controlled by a Leviathan government, or rather, a government that is all powerful. Montesquieu suggested that powers should be separated into legislative, judicial and executive branches. Each branch should have the right to check and balance the other branches. That way, the government is so large that no one interest or one single ambition can get very powerful. Locke stated that the individual is born autonomous, with three core rights.

He believed that man is capable of both good and evil. The evil in a man leads him to combine his small power with others to protect his Natural Rights against a government that no longer looks after the rights and well-being of it's people. Rousseau claims that the problem with society is not human nature, but nature itself. To fix man, you must fix the environment in which he lives. The wealth must be redistributed so that everyone becomes equal.

People are only corrupted by their environment. These philosopher's believed that people should be governed according to how they inherently are. The Scientific Revolution didn't emphasize religion. Men of the Enlightenment believed in Deism. This meant that God was a creator, and creator alone. Specifically, he was not redeemer.

Happiness, or rather, a utopia was man's true end. The enlightened man was caught up in this earth. All progress was secularized. Man's destiny was in his own hands. Their thoughts became that society was perfectible without an Armageddon.

They believed in no fall of man. Therefore, there was no need for a savior. Men just needed to discover nature's laws and obey them. Man credits himself, or nature, for the things that get accomplished. Natural law is the basis for morality, not the Bible. God was no longer a personality.

He was said to be unknowable. The Scientific Revolution completely changed the minds of great thinkers and everyday people. God no longer mattered, nor did the old methods of Medieval learning. People made vast amounts of discoveries and conclusions with nothing but their reason. Knowledge was the ultimate happiness in man's life.