

# [Enlightenment essay](https://assignbuster.com/enlightenment-essay/)

[Philosophy](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/philosophy/)

The Age of Enlightenment took place in the 18th century and it was preceded by the Age of Reason that was in the 17th century. The Age of Enlightenment gave rise to modern mathematics, physics and technology. The impact was not only felt in the areas of science and technology but also development and advancement in philosophy, religion, society and politics as well. Historically, enlightenment was a philosophical movement in Europe that was taking place in the 18th century and brought about many reforms through the use of reason to scrutinize what was deemed acceptable traditions and doctrines at the time. The major areas that were under scrutiny by the enlightened people were nature, God, reason and man which led to fundamental developments in art, religion, philosophy and politics. This movement’s goal was the betterment of humanity over the supernatural through combating superstition and prejudice.
Enlightenment is when a person emerges from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is when a person does not have the capability of putting to use their own understanding without the guidance of someone else, a guardian. Immaturity is said to be self-imposed when a person already has understanding but doesn’t have courage and resolve to utilize their understanding. Instead they look upto someone else for guidance yet they have what it takes (Konigsberg 1).
Kant goes on to state that lack of enlightenment is promoted by laziness and cowardice that men have long after they are mature enough to be independent thinkers. The laziness is brought about by people having alternatives to thinking for themselves as books will serve as understanding, the clergy will serve as their conscience and the physicians will serve as their dietary guide. Hence people would rather pay for other people to do all the thinking for them as it is termed as an irksome job by many. Immaturity then becomes a natural thing which is difficult to come out of. Knowledge is the outcome of enlightenment. This knowledge was believed to conquer fear, superstition and prejudice according to Kant. Enlightenment is the freedom of a person to think on his own without guidance from a guardian. The freedom to use reason in every aspect of life would lead to the betterment of humanity.
Francis Bacon in his Book 1 of the New Organon introduces his famous doctrine of the “ idols.” These idols are said to be hindrances and natural tendencies that inhibit the mind from fully understanding nature. By using the term idols, Bacon is means “ images” or “ phantoms” according to the Greek interpretation and not false gods. There are four idols. The first is the idols of the tribe which are common to all are: our senses which are easily deceivable, our tendency to discern through generalization, our tendency towards wishful thinking and our tendency to rush or jump into conclusions making premature judgments rather than fact finding through thorough investigation.
Secondly, are the idols of the cave that is high respect for a select-few authority; special allegiance to a particular theory or discipline, and a cookie-cutter mentality that confines our mentality to only what we know thus leaving no room for investigation and research. The third idols are those of the market place which are hindrances brought about by interaction with different people. The main challenge is language through spoken word and terminologies that give conflicting meanings. The fourth and last idols are those of the theatre. These come from systems of philosophy most commonly the sophistical, empirical and superstitious philosophies.
The three philosophers namely Immanuel Kant, Francis Bacon and Jean le Rond de’ Alembert were pushing for enlightenment of the public so that people would move from a compounded frame of mind and be empowered to make informed decisions. Making informed decision can only come through better understanding things and applying this knowledge in their everyday lives. Understanding and indeed deep understanding comes from learning and knowing facts that can only come about through questioning, research and investigations resulting in enlightenment.

## Work Cited

Konigsberg. “ Immanuel Kant.” What is Enlightenment? Prussia, 30 Sept. 1784. Web. Sept. 14
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