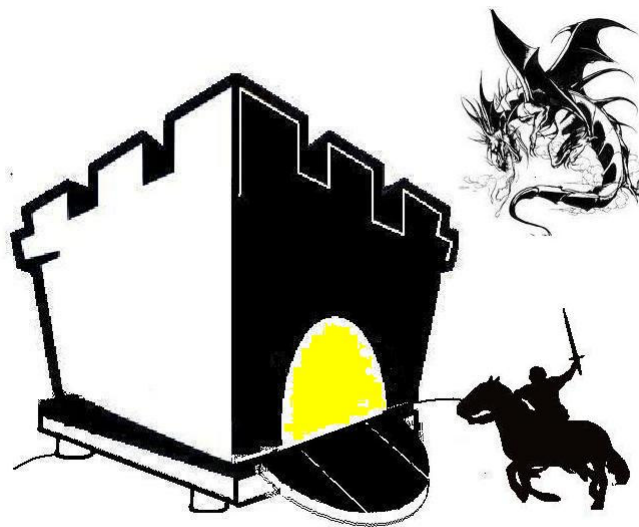

Fortress Living



Three Solutions for Your Greatest Problems in Life

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Lesson Nine

Enlightenment Solutions to the Greatest Problems in Life

Seven Historical Periods

PERIOD	YEARS	Normative Solutions (Philosophy and Theology)	Situational Solutions (Arts and Culture)	Relational Solutions (Ethics and Spirituality)
Ancient	5 th Century BC to 5 th Century AD	The State Gives Norms ----- <i>Rationalism</i>	Classicism ----- Stauary	* Ethical Hedonism * Bad: religious persecution * Good: religious purification
Medieval	500 AD to 1400	The Church Gives Norms ----- <i>Scholasticism</i>	Mysticism ----- Byzantine	* Ethical Legalism * Bad: Biblical illiteracy * Good: Piety and Devotion
Renaissance	1400 to 1600	Reason Gives Norms ----- <i>Humanism</i>	Naturalism ----- Giotto	* Ethical Dualism * Bad: compartmentalization * Good: helpful inventions
Enlightenment	1600 to 1800	Subjective Mind Gives Norms ----- <i>Rational Idealism</i>	Neoclassicism ----- Beethoven and J.L David	* Ethical Utopianism * Bad: idolatry of the state * Good: religious liberty
Scientific	1800 to 1900	Science Gives Norms ----- <i>Empiricism</i>	Romanticism ----- R. Wagner <i>Ring Cycle</i>	* Ethical Positivism * Bad: reason over revelation * Good: reasons to believe
Modern	1900 to 2000	Self Gives Norms ----- <i>Pragmatism</i>	Impressionism ----- Monet <i>Poplars at Giverny</i>	* Ethical Individualism * Bad: social isolation * Good: inner spirituality
Post-modern	2000 and Beyond	No Norms ----- <i>Nihilism</i>	Deconstructionism ----- Picasso <i>Le Demoiselles</i>	* Ethical Relativism * Bad: reject tradition * Good: truth alone

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Enlightenment	1600 to 1800	Subjective Mind Gives Norms ----- <i>Rational Idealism</i>	Neoclassicism ----- Beethoven and J.L David	* Ethical Utopianism * Bad: idolatry of the state * Good: religious liberty
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The Period: 1600 to 1800

As we've seen with all the historic time periods, the term Enlightenment is not precise. In some ways, it denotes a continuation of trends begun in the Renaissance. Even so, authors of the time recognized the advance and liked the term because it communicated a pride of achievement and delineated a break with the "dark ages" that preceded them. Two extremely important Enlightenment thinkers were Immanuel Kant in Germany and Jean Jacques Rousseau in France. I'll talk more about their influence below. They viewed themselves as the "enlightened" ones taking humanistic ideals further than ever before, especially the emphasis on the individual self to understand truth and maintain freedom.

The end date of the Enlightenment is equally as imprecise, though it is generally said to conclude with the end of the French and American revolutions. Those events ushered in even more philosophical and cultural changes as we'll see.

Dominant Normative Solutions: Rational Idealism



Immanuel Kant was one of the most important philosophers in history. Though thinkers before him—from the days of Socrates—wrestled with the problems of knowledge, Kant dramatically changed the perspective on this age old battle. He even invented a grandiose term to describe it. He called it the Copernican Revolution of Knowledge. Two hundred years before, Copernicus had ushered in the end of the Medieval Period by his scientific discoveries about the cosmos. For thousands of years, scholars believed that the earth was the center of the cosmos. Using the growing technology available to him, Copernicus demonstrated that the earth is *not*. And this shift pulled the proverbial rug out from under the dogmatism of Medieval authority about the universe. In using the term "Copernican Revolution of Knowledge" Kant was attempting to elevate his philosophical discussion to the same level.

Prior to Kant, the "two story" universe was understood represented two distinct realities or realms. Both could be known but the pathway to that knowledge was different. Kant's revolution concluded that the "upper level" exists but cannot be known by direct knowledge. He made up the word "numenal" to describe this upper story. The lower level he called the "phenomenal world."

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UPPER LEVEL: Numenal World

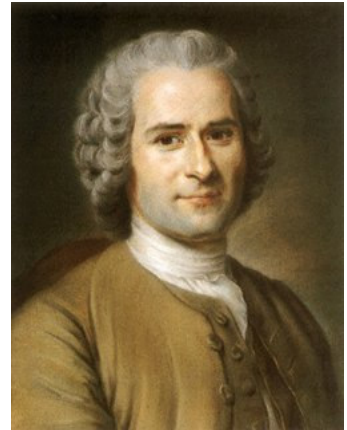
LOWER LEVEL: Phenomenal World

The Revolution of Knowledge claimed by Kant related to how we know what's real. Instead of viewing reality as something “outside” of us—“objective”—Kant said we make our own reality. Therefore, reality is “subjective.” That's why he called it the “phenomenal world.” The word “phenomenon” is from the Greek language and literally means “appearance.” So the phenomenal world—what we see, hear, touch, taste and smell—is only an appearance. And that appearance is shaped more by what we think about it, than the “object” itself.

Perhaps you can begin to see why Kant's revolution was so significant for modern history. He provided the bridge by which modern thinking about the individual entered the normative, situational and relational solutions entered the mainstream.

Though I am linking Kant and Rousseau in terms of their assumptions about reality, they arrived at very different conclusions about what to do about it.

Kant believed in the power of enlightened reason. Though he grew increasingly agnostic about *objective* knowledge of truth, he never doubted that mankind could use rational powers to make logical and meaningful decisions. Meanwhile, in France, philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau pondered the same issues. He too was growing agnostic about objective knowledge. He would have been comfortable with Kant's two story world. However, for Rousseau, the solution was not to follow your mind but to follow your heart. The answers to the greatest problems in life were not found in logic or science but in unrestricted personal freedom. For Rousseau then, freedom—the right to do what you want without anyone standing in your way—was the ultimate normative solution in the situations of life.



UPPER LEVEL: Freedom

LOWER LEVEL: Nature

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Dominant Situational Solutions: Neoclassicism

The growing confidence in man's powers of individual reason, combined with the belief in individual freedom, created unusual tensions in the artists and craftsmen of the Enlightenment. To try and legitimize their political and social agendas, many of the official artworks of the period reached way back to classical styles and themes in a movement known as neoclassicism. The prefix "neo" just means "new." The Renaissance emphasis on nature and realistic representation continued, though in some of the more politically motivated works a kind of pseudo-realism was utilized, much like in ancient Greece and Rome, to communicate Enlightenment ideals like liberty.



For example, one of the most influential painters of the French Enlightenment was Jacques-Louis David. David used his realistic style and considerable talent to glorify liberty and embody it in his hero, Napoleon Bonaparte. He truly believed Napoleon represented the best hope for freedom for France.

Look at the famous portrait of Napoleon at left. He is more than a man. Like the Greek and Roman statues, he is almost god-like. And in the midst of the combat-carnage in the background, he points onward and upward toward the ideal of liberty.

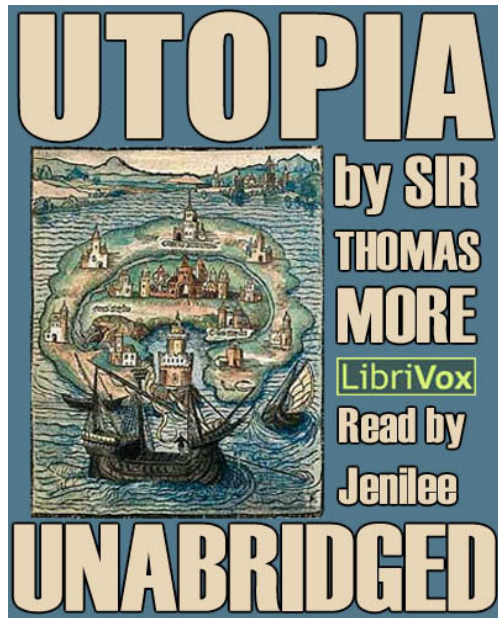
David truly believed that's what Bonaparte intended to do—initially anyway. However, when Napoleon reneged on his promises, reigning terror on his countrymen, David grew disillusioned.

There was a similar development in the music of the Enlightenment. One of its composers was Ludwig von Beethoven.

Beethoven was one of the greatest musical composers of all time. His music influenced all composers who lived during and after his life. But, even more importantly, his style pushed the limits of traditional music in new directions. Composers before him primarily wrote music to be performed in the church. Beethoven did that but mainly wrote for the concert hall. Even the sacred music he wrote (such as the *Ode to Joy*, the last part of the famous 9th Symphony) viewed religious themes through a decidedly humanistic perspective. Music was not primarily a medium by which to worship God but to worship man's achievements.

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Dominant Relational Solutions: Ethical Utopianism



Two hundred years before Kant and Rousseau, Thomas More of England wrote a novel titled *Utopia* in which he outlined his vision of a perfect society. It was a fictional work located on an island in the Atlantic ocean, but it clearly reflected his humanistic ideals. By the Enlightenment Period, growing numbers of thinkers and workers believed that Utopia was finally within reach. The word “utopia” describes a place of perfection and peace. Though Kant and Rousseau offered radically different ideas of how it could be achieved, what is significant is they both believed in the ideal. As such, their idealism spawned a view of morality I call Ethical Utopianism. Ethical Utopianism provided the relational solutions to the great problems of failure, pain and danger by promising the answer in a perfect society—one where liberty, brotherhood and equality (the three stated values of the French Revolution) reigned over all.

Rousseau exemplified this ethic. He wrote about it as the “noble savage.” For Rousseau, the greatest expression of liberty was to be found not in the highly advanced institutions of Europe but in the primitive huts of the undeveloped world. He was sure there were uneducated, unruly, unchurched people in the undeveloped world that were “noble” and untainted by the flotsam and debris of contemporary culture. They were not ruled by logic, by religion or by kings but by their own passions.

If this sounds like something heard in our own day you’re right. Rousseau’s infatuation is shared by many today who mistakenly believe that it is technology or education that destroys a civilization.

Kant’s version of Ethical Utopianism was radically different. Since he believed that man should be ruled by the head, rather than the heart, he was not at all inclined to glamorize the primitive savage but the trained intellectual. The rational idealism of Kant was instrumental in the utopianism that influenced the American Revolution as well. The Founders of the United States believed that America was to be that utopia—a City on a Hill, providing a beacon of light to the rest of the world. Though the French Revolution promised a similar result, it ended in a miserable reign of terror symbolized by the guillotine. Though there was bloodshed in the American Revolution, many historians have noted how different it was from its French counterpart.

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The difference was not limited to culture or even the issues of the day as much to the foundations undergirding them. Rousseau's ethic, grounded as it was in unrestrained individual freedom, resulted in anarchy as every level of society sought to conquer and overcome the others. Kant's ethic, however, founded upon individual reason, resulted in the rule of law. Though not a perfect foundation by any means, it provided more stability than Rousseau's.

The Limits of Enlightenment Idealism

- **The Enlightenment Foundation –The Norms of Life**



For normative solutions to the greatest problems of life—danger, pain and failure—the Enlightenment reached forward for answers. Immanuel Kant, it's most influential philosopher, proposed a Copernican Revolution of Knowledge, suggesting that the answers are *within* man's mind not outside it. Humanism has always believed in the power of human reason, but during the Enlightenment that began to mean that the very existence of those norms for life, not just the knowledge of them, is within the mind. We saw how Kant distinguished the Numenal and Phenomenal Worlds. The Numenal cannot be known directly. It's as if in our two story house, there is an "attic" above the main floor with no access or window. We know it's there only because it is logical for it to be there, not because anyone can ever know it with his mind.

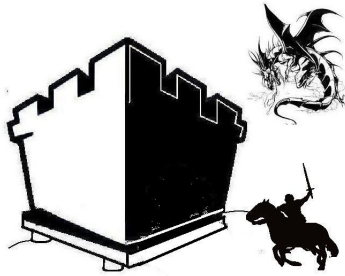
You can see what this would do to Christian beliefs like God, heaven, miracles and the Bible. They would be relegated to the Numinal World (if regarded at all). This is exactly what happened in the halls of education and science throughout the Western world. And this foundation laid the groundwork for the growing rejection of Christian teaching in our modern era.

It's important to note that men like Kant were not atheists. They did not reject the existence of God or the truth of the Bible. Indeed, other Enlightenment thinkers, like John Locke, wrote important works on reason that provided much of the framework for our own United States Constitution with its emphasis on "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Religious liberty was one of the fruits of that ideal and so we can appreciate much of what they said. However, their ideas on knowledge itself made it increasingly difficult to take "old- fashioned" beliefs very seriously—especially since modern science was providing so much "evidence" to prove their own claims on such things as the origin of the universe and human diseases.

We've been seeing that the source of normative solutions for the greatest problems in life has changed throughout the different periods of history. Kant revolution of knowledge placed that authority not just in humanity but in subjective perception of reality. This meant that everyone ultimately creates his own little reality. And as we will see in upcoming lessons, that eventually spells the end of humanity.

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- **The Enlightenment Structure –The Situations of Life**

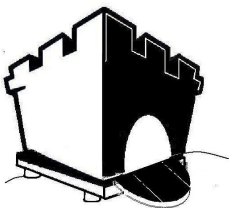


It's the sensitive men—the artists and craftsmen—who define situational solutions to the greatest problems of life. In a good way, the artists of the Enlightenment continued to discover the natural things in God's world with their appreciation for the particular things. The naturalism of the Renaissance, with its emphasis on representation and realism continued.

Increasing numbers of artists attempted to use that expression for political purposes. Neoclassicism was an attempt to reach back into the traditional scenery or poses of ancient past in order to demonstrate the triumph of modern ideas. We saw that painters like Jacques-Louis David and composers like Ludwig von Beethoven firmly believed in their utopian ideals and the perfectibility of man. They believed that if given enough time and freedom, man would triumph over every obstacle and truly become the “measure of all things.”

As we've seen, situational solutions rely on maintaining balance and equilibrium in the larger systems. Certainly freedom and liberty, when they exist, are expressions of balance and equilibrium. In David's paintings we can spy some of that hope and optimism. Though David dreamed that rulers like Napoleon would grant them this balance and equilibrium, he was sadly mistaken. Napoleon certainly was not afraid to issue norms and rules for solving the greatest problems in life. However, his norms were hatched in his own subjective (and evil) imagination. He justified all kinds of atrocity and terror because his subjective perception of reality put him at the center of the universe. And in the end, he destroyed both himself and his country.

- **The Enlightenment Access – The Relationships of Life**



During the Enlightenment, as in every other period, the bridge between the situations and norms of life was relationships: marriages and families, neighbors, employers and rulers. Ethics is the study of how relationships work. I suggested that the ethic of the Enlightenment was characterized by utopianism—a naïve confidence in the ability of man to solve his own problems and build a perfect world.

But, as most adults learn, “wishing don't make it so.” In the practical outworking of their own relationships, Utopian Ethics did not work.

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Take, for example, Rousseau. He despised conventional morality and replaced it with his own ethic based on his ideas of unrestrained freedom. In practice, however, he was a liar, cheat, and a spontaneous worshipper of the whim. He once stole something from his patroness and, when the theft was discovered, allowed a maid to take the blame and be punished so he wouldn't be exposed. Once, when a friend with whom he was taking a walk had an epileptic seizure, he panicked and hid in the crowd that gathered to see the bizarre sight, rather than risk being seen with him. In his writings he glorified the impulses of the "Noble Savage" suggesting that such was the highest expression of morality. Rousseau did indeed act like a savage. But it was anything but noble.

Though he wasn't as beastly in his relationships as Rousseau, Beethoven's ethical idealism did not work out very well either. Like other composers his personal life was filled with storm and stress, not at all like the Enlightenment optimism he espoused. He began going deaf as a young man and always seemed to have financial problems. He was an alcoholic. And it is possible he contracted venereal disease because of his promiscuous lifestyle. Some historians speculate he died of lead poisoning brought on by contaminated medicines. But toward the end of his life he grew disenchanted with the possibilities of his idealism. Though his early compositions were filled with energy, optimism and hope for the future, toward the end of his life he wrote dark and haunting, melodies foreboding the new age that was about to dawn.



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Quiz 9 Questions

1. The Enlightenment Period covers approximately what years?
 - a. 1200 to 1600
 - b. 1600 to 1800
 - c. 1800 to 1900

2. The dominant normative solution during this period
 - a. Empiricism
 - b. Humanism
 - c. Rational Idealism

3. The philosopher Immanuel Kant proposed what kind of revolution of knowledge?
 - a. Copernican
 - b. Capuccian
 - c. Canadian

4. Jacques-Louise David painted in a style called
 - a. Neolithic
 - b. Neohumanistic
 - c. Neoclassical

5. Ultimately, the Ethical Utopianism of the Enlightenment failed to deliver on its promise of a perfect world because:
 - a. It did not provide a sufficient base for norms
 - b. The armies of the king were not strong enough
 - c. Napoleon and other Enlightenment leaders made tactical errors in their battles