

## **IMMANUEL KANT (1724–1804)**

### **“WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT?” (1784)**

Enlightenment is man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man’s inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is this tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. *Sapere aude!* “Have courage to use your own reason!”—that is the motto of enlightenment.

Laziness and cowardice are the reasons why so great a portion of mankind, after nature has long since discharged them from external direction (*naturalier maiorennnes*), nevertheless remains under lifelong tutelage, and why it is so easy for others to set themselves up as their guardians. It is so easy not to be of age. If I have a book which understands for me, a pastor who has a conscience for me, a physician who decides my diet, and so forth, I need not trouble myself. I need not think, if I can only pay—others will readily undertake the irksome work for me.

That the step to competence is held to be very dangerous by the far greater portion of mankind (and by the entire fair sex)—quite apart from its being arduous—is seen to by those guardians who have so kindly assumed superintendence over them. After the guardians have first made their domestic cattle dumb and have made sure that these placid creatures will not dare take a single step without harness of the cart to which they are confined, the guardians then show them the danger which threatens if they try to go alone. Actually, however, this danger is not so great, for by falling a few times they would finally learn to walk alone. But an example of this failure makes them timid and ordinarily frightens them away from all further trials.

For any single individual to work himself out of the life under tutelage which has become almost his nature is very difficult. He has come to be fond of this state, and he is for the present really incapable of making use of his reason, for no one has ever let him try it out. Statutes and formulas, those mechanical tools of the rational employment or rather misemployment of his natural gifts, are the fetters of an everlasting tutelage. Whoever throws them off makes only an uncertain leap over the narrowest ditch because he is not accustomed to that kind of free motion. Therefore, there are only few who have succeeded by their own exercise of mind both in freeing themselves from incompetence and in achieving a steady pace.

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For this enlightenment, however, nothing is required but freedom, and indeed the most harmless among all things to which this term can properly be applied. It is the freedom to make public use of one’s reason at every point. But I hear on all sides, “Do not argue!” The officer says: “Do not argue but drill!” The tax collector: “Do not argue but pay!” The cleric: “Do not argue but believe!” Only one prince in the world says, “Argue as much as you will, and about what you will, but obey!” Everywhere there is restriction on freedom.

Which restriction is an obstacle to enlightenment, and which us not an obstacle but a promoter of it? I answer: The public use of one’s reason must always be free, and it alone can bring about enlightenment among men. The private use of reason, on the other

hand, may often be very narrowly restricted without particularly hindering the progress of enlightenment. By the public use of one's reason I understand the use which a person makes of it as a scholar before the reading public. Private use I call that which one may make of it in particular civil post or office which is intrusted to him.

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If we are asked, "Do we now live in an *enlightened age*?" the answer is, "No," but we do live in an *age of enlightenment*. As things now stand, much is lacking which prevents men from being, or easily becoming, capable of correctly using their own reason in religious matters with assurance and free from outside direction. But, on the other hand, we have clear indications that the field has now been opened wherein men may freely deal with these things and that the obstacles to general enlightenment or the release from self-imposed tutelage are gradually being reduced. In this respect, this is the age of enlightenment, or the century of Frederick.

**Taken from Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?," in *The Portable Enlightenment Reader*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (New York: Penguin Books, 1995): 1–6.**

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**FRANCISCO JAVIER CLAVIJERO (1731–1787)**  
***THE HISTORY OF MEXICO (1780)***

**Preface**

I have undertaken to write *The History of México*, despite the demanding nature of the study and the high cost of buying books from Madrid and Cádiz, as well as other European cities, for three reasons: to avoid the irksome inactivity to which I found myself condemned, to serve my *Patria*<sup>1</sup> insofar as I was able, and to restore the splendor of the truth about *América*, so unjustly maligned by certain modern writers. Therefore, I have read almost everything previously published on the subject and examined a large number of *Mexica* painted manuscripts.

**Dissertation on the Physical and Moral Constitution of the *Mexica* People**

Four classes of men can be discerned in México and the other countries of *América*. They are: 1) Those who are vulgarly called Indians, but ought to be called *americanos*, that is, the descendants of the original inhabitants of the New World, whose blood has not been mixed with that of the Old World; 2) Those from Europe, Africa, or Asia who presently live in *América*; 3) The children and descendants of these newcomers, who are called creoles (especially when of pure European descent) by the Spanish; 4) The mixed races, whether European/*americano*, European/African, or *americano*/African, collectively called *castas* by the Spanish. Mr. de Pauw applies his vicious criticisms to all these classes of men. He supposes, or perhaps deliberately misrepresents, the climate of *América* to be so malignant that it causes degeneration not only in the creoles and *americanos* but even in the Europeans who were born under the supposedly more benign skies, in a climate supposedly more favourable to all forms of animal life.

Leaving aside the errors that Mr. de Pauw and other writers of his ilk direct against other classes of men, I will address only what he says about those properly called *americanos*, the most maligned and most defenceless against his criticisms. If I were motivated by a desire to benefit or aggrandize myself, I would naturally have preferred to write a dissertation clearing the creoles against Mr. de Pauw's slanders. Besides being the easiest defense to make, it is the one that most nearly touches me, because I was born in *América* of Spanish parents, without a trace of Indian blood, nor have I anything personally to gain here. It is only a love of truth and of humanity that leads me to embrace the cause on behalf of which I write.<sup>2</sup>

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Thus far we have examined what Mr. de Pauw says about the physical qualities of *americanos*. Let us see what nonsense he has to offer concerning their mental and spiritual qualities. He finds their memories to be so defective that they cannot remember today what they did yesterday. He believes their minds so obtuse that they are incapable of thought, their spirits so cold that they do not feel love. Mr. de Pauw paints their

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<sup>1</sup> *Patria*, which could be translated as "homeland" or "fatherland," was an important but still somewhat ambiguous term in this period.

<sup>2</sup> Clavijero means Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs (who were more properly known as the *Mexica*).

portrait in hues so grim that he certainly would have numbered among those who, centuries ago, called into question their very humanity. I know that many other Europeans, and strangely, even a few descendants of Europeans born in *América*, share de Pauw's way of thinking, some out of ignorance or lack of reflection, some simply because they desire to affirm the superiority of Europe. But their opinions, even were they more widely shared, cannot overwhelm the force of my own experience, as well as the testimony of certain Europeans whose great authority flows, not only from their learning, but also from their direct experience in *América* and their willingness to speak out, in honor of truth, against their own compatriots.

**Taken from Francisco Javier Clavijero, "A Scholarly Polemic: Clavijero Refutes the Myth of *Americano* Inferiority," in *Latin American Independence: An Anthology of Sources*, trans. and eds. Sarah C. Chambers and John Charles Chasteen (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2010), 26–28.**