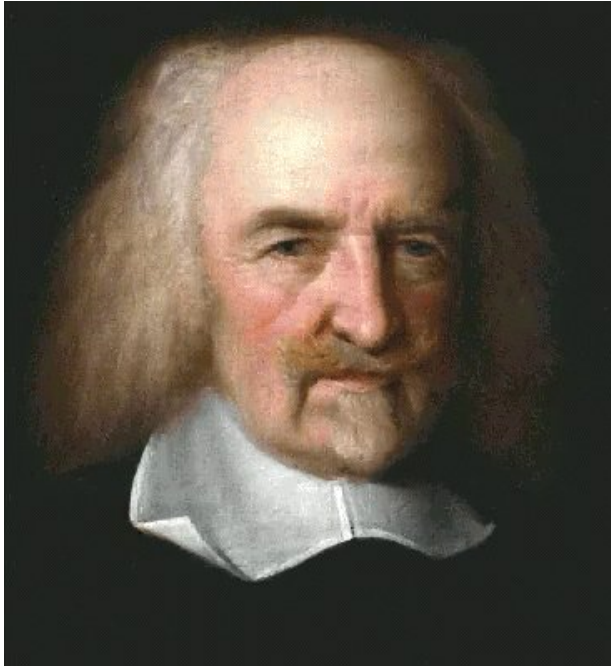


Hobbes

During a time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war... In such condition, there is no place for industry... no arts; no letters; no society; and, which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death. And the life of man [is] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

— Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1651

Hobbes's Social Contract



Thomas Hobbes expressed his views in a work called *Leviathan* (1651). The horrors of the English Civil War convinced him that all humans were naturally selfish and wicked. Without governments to keep order, Hobbes said, there would be “war . . . of every man against every man,” and life would be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”

Hobbes argued that to escape such a bleak life, people had to hand over their rights to a strong ruler. In exchange, they gained law and order. Hobbes called this agreement by which people created a government the social contract. Because people acted in their own self-interest, Hobbes said, the ruler needed total power to keep citizens under control. The best government was one that had the awesome power of a leviathan (sea monster). In Hobbes's view, such a government was an absolute monarchy, which could impose order and demand obedience.

Diderot

There are three principal means of acquiring knowledge... observation of nature, reflection, and experimentation. Observation collects facts; reflection combines them; experimentation verifies the result of that combination.

Man will never be free until the last king is strangled with the entrails of the last priest.

Every man has his dignity. I'm willing to forget mine, but at my own discretion and not when someone else tells me to.

— Denis Diderot,

Diderot's *Encyclopedia*

The most influential of the salon hostesses in Voltaire's time was Marie-Thérèse Geoffrin (zhuh•frehn). She helped finance the project of a leading philosophe named Denis Diderot (DEE•duh•ROH). Diderot created a large set of books to which many leading scholars of Europe contributed articles and essays. He called it *Encyclopedia* and began publishing the first volumes in 1751.

The Enlightenment views expressed in the articles soon angered both the French government and the Catholic Church. Their censors banned the work. They said it undermined royal authority, encouraged a spirit of revolt, and fostered "moral corruption, irreligion, and unbelief." Nonetheless, Diderot continued publishing his *Encyclopedia*.

The salons and the *Encyclopedia* helped spread Enlightenment ideas to educated people all over Europe. Enlightenment ideas also eventually spread through newspapers, pamphlets, and even political songs.

Enlightenment ideas about government and equality attracted the attention of a growing literate middle class, which could afford to buy many books and support the work of artists.



Smith

It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest.

Consumption is the sole end and purpose of all production; and the interest of the producer ought to be attended to, only so far as it may be necessary for promoting that of the consumer.

It is not by augmenting the capital of the country, but by rendering a greater part of that capital active and productive than would otherwise be so, that the most judicious operations of banking can increase the industry of the country.

— Adam Smith

The Philosophers of Industrialization

The term *laissez faire* (LEHS•ay•FAIR) refers to the economic policy of letting owners of industry and business set working conditions without interference. This policy favors a free market unregulated by the government. The term is French for “let do,” and by extension, “let people do as they please.”

Laissez-faire Economics

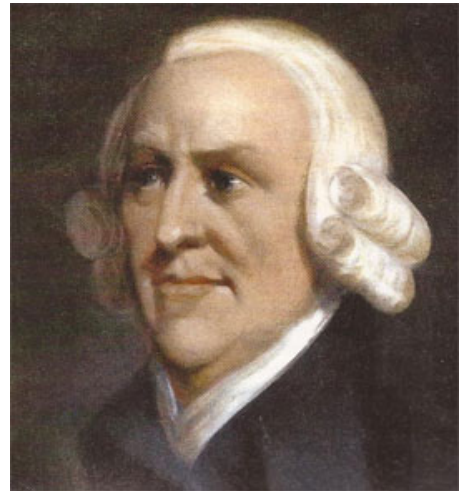
Laissez-faire economics stemmed from French economic philosophers of the Enlightenment. They criticized the idea that nations grow wealthy by placing heavy tariffs on foreign goods. In fact, they argued, government regulations only interfered with the production of wealth. These philosophers believed that if government allowed free trade—the flow of commerce in the world market without government regulation—the economy would prosper. **Adam Smith**, a professor at the University of Glasgow, Scotland, defended the idea of a free economy, or free markets, in his 1776 book *The Wealth of Nations*. According to Smith, economic liberty guaranteed economic progress. As a result, government should not interfere. Smith’s arguments rested on what he called the three natural laws of economics:

- the law of self-interest—People work for their own good.
- the law of competition—Competition forces people to make a better product.
- the law of supply and demand—Enough goods would be produced at the lowest possible price to meet demand in a market economy.

In his book *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith argued that if individuals freely followed their own self-interest, the world would be an orderly and progressive place. Social harmony would result without any government direction, “as if by an invisible hand.” Smith applied an invisible hand of his own. After his death, people discovered that he had secretly donated large sums of his income to charities.

The Economists of Capitalism

Smith’s basic ideas were supported by British economists Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo. Like Smith, they believed that **natural laws** governed economic life. Their important ideas were the foundation of laissez-faire capitalism. **Capitalism** is an economic system in which the factors of production are privately owned and money is invested in business ventures to make a profit. Laissez-faire thinkers such as Smith, Malthus, and Ricardo opposed government efforts to help poor workers. They thought that creating minimum wage laws and better working conditions would upset the free market system, lower profits, and undermine the production of wealth in society.



Wollstonecraft

Women are systematically degraded by receiving the trivial attentions which men think it manly to pay to the sex, when, in fact, men are insultingly supporting their own superiority.

Strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there will be an end to blind obedience.

Women ought to have representatives, instead of being arbitrarily governed without any direct share allowed them in the deliberations of government.

The divine right of husbands, like the divine right of kings, may, it is hoped, in this enlightened age, be contested without danger.

— Mary Wollstonecraft

The philosophes challenged many assumptions about government and society. But they often took a traditional view toward women. Rousseau, for example, developed many progressive ideas about education. However, he believed that a girl's education should mainly teach her how to be a helpful wife and mother. Other male social critics scolded women for reading novels because they thought it encouraged idleness and wickedness. Still, some male writers argued for more education for women and for women's equality in marriage.

During the 1700s, women picked up these themes. Among the most persuasive was Mary Wollstonecraft, who published an essay called *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792. In the essay, she disagreed with Rousseau that women's education should be secondary to men's. Rather, she argued that women, like men, need education to become virtuous and useful. Wollstonecraft also urged women to enter the male-dominated fields of medicine and politics.

A strong advocate of education for women, Wollstonecraft herself received little formal schooling. She and her two sisters taught themselves by studying books at home. With her sisters, she briefly ran a school. These experiences shaped much of her thoughts about education.

Wollstonecraft eventually took a job with a London publisher. There, she met many leading radicals of the day. One of them was her future husband, the writer William Godwin. Wollstonecraft died at age 38, after giving birth to their daughter, Mary. This child, whose married name was Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, went on to write the classic novel *Frankenstein*.

