

**Introduction to Western Political Thought**  
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**Lecture No. 20**  
**Kant-I: Intro & What is Enlightenment?**

Hello and welcome everyone. Today, we are going to start with a new thinker, Immanuel Kant. And on Kant also we are going to have three lectures. In the lecture today, we will briefly focus on his bio sketch or personal life, his intellectual context, and his views on enlightenment. Kant is a quintessential enlightenment thinker who believed that reason and rationality should guide our actions. That means the use of reason and rationality would create a society that would be enlightened and progressive.

Kant joined a group of thinkers who argued about how to achieve enlightenment. Both at the individual and the level of society or community and how to create peace, order in the society by using reason and rationality which would be the basis of all kinds of knowledge and would save the actions of individuals. In this lecture, today, we are going to focus on his views on enlightenment. In the second lecture, we will discuss how he connected this idea of reason and rationality to the question of freedom, morality, and autonomy.

In the concluding lecture on Kant, we will focus on his views on 'kingdom of ends', dignity, perpetual peace before looking at the critical assessment of Kant's political philosophy or political thought. So, that would be our division of lectures on Kant.

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- Kant was the quintessential figure of enlightenment and a representative thinker of German idealism. He had a tremendous influence on the 19<sup>th</sup> Century's continental philosophy. He set out to analyze the limits and functioning of knowledge. His philosophy influenced the works of Schopenhauer, Hegel, Herder, and many others. It is said that to be a philosopher, one has to be Kantian. He was a quintessential enlightenment thinker who emphasized the public use of reason.
- He combined freedom, morality, and autonomy and developed a very distinct sense of duty for the individual, which should be binding for them without any considerations for its consequences. He emphasized the individual's dignity and envisaged a society where everyone should be treated as an end in themselves. Among the nation-states, he advocated a theory of perpetual peace and freedom without recourse to violence. He was also a strong advocate of republicanism and cosmopolitanism.
- However, Kant's political philosophy is impenetrable even for the advanced learner not to say about the beginners or ordinary people. In this sense, he was truly a philosophers' philosopher. For our purpose, we shall be focusing mostly on the secondary works on Kant and a few of his newspaper articles and essays besides *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Through these texts, we will try to understand Kant's views on enlightenment, categorical imperative, state, politics, individual, freedom, autonomy, morality, and the theory of perpetual peace.

Now, we will start with today's lecture. Here, Kant appears to be a kind of quintessential figure of enlightenment and a representative thinker of 'German Idealism'. The 'German Idealism' was a well-developed school of thought within the continental philosophy which believed in the primacy of ideas. And how ideas seep into human actions and determine all social collective actions in society.

Kant was a representative thinker of that school of thought which we call 'German Idealism' different from materialism or practical thinking that was there in England. So, he remained a quintessential enlightenment figure. When we talk about reason and rationality, immediately Kant comes to our mind. And it becomes kind of synonymous with Kantian ethics, views on philosophy, epistemology, and metaphysics. Thus, Kant has remained the quintessential figure of enlightenment and enlightenment is something that gives primacy to reason and rationality as a source of knowledge. It also something that shapes or guides human action.

Kant was a kind of synonymous figure with modes of thinking and also a representative thinker of 'German Idealism'. He had a tremendous influence on nineteenth-century continental philosophy. So after Kant, every thinker needed to read his philosophy and engage with his philosophy. Whether they accept or challenge it that was a different thing. But Kant had a tremendous influence on the subsequent generation of philosophers throughout the continent. His major objective or primary concern was to understand what is called the limits and functioning of human knowledge.

So, enlightenment, it was believed that knowledge is power so to say, Francis Bacon. Now, what should be the source of knowledge? How does it operate? And what we can know and what remains which we cannot know? So, there would be things in themselves that are very difficult for a human being to understand. What we understand is guided by our senses and our sense perception, and cognitive ideas. Kant's primary objective in many of his writings is to understand the limits and functioning of knowledge. What we can know? How we should know it? And what are the limits to our knowledge? That remains the primary concern of many of his philosophical treatises.

His philosophy influenced the works of Schopenhauer, Hegel, Herder, and many other continental philosophers. And it is said that a philosopher, to be a philosopher, one has to be Kantian. And Schopenhauer used to say that all men are children unless he read or understood Kant. Kant had a determining influence on continental philosophy. He was a quintessential enlightenment thinker who emphasized the public use of reason. And what did

he mean by the public use of reason? We will discuss when we will discuss Kantian views on enlightenment.

So, it is necessary to understand that for Kant, a kind of quintessential enlightenment thinker, reason and rationality is the basis of knowledge. However, what do we mean by knowledge? or in other words, what are the limits of knowledge that one needs to engage with or analyze? And that remains the major concern of Kant. In his philosophy, he combined the ideas like freedom, morality, and autonomy. So, he combined all of these three. And in doing so, he was guided by a kind of Rousseau's approach to freedom and how one exercises freedom by engagement in the public life of the community by following the 'general will' that is self-legislated.

When we will discuss Kant's ideas on 'categorical imperative', in the second lecture, we will discuss more on how he combined freedom, morality, and autonomy to get this idea. And for Kant, the most important thing for an individual was to be guided by a sense of duty without any consideration for the consequence of one's duty. He developed a very distinct sense of duty for the individual which should be binding for them without any consideration for its consequences. Thus, through the use of reason or what he calls the 'categorical imperative', the human being will know their duty.

And once they understood it and had the courage of following it, they should not be guided by the consequences of their duty in performing what they think is their duty. More we will discuss this idea when we will discuss the 'categorical imperative'. So, Kant combined freedom, morality, and autonomy, and developed a very distinct sense of duty for the individual that is binding on them. And Kant in his personal life practiced this kind of philosophy as well. So, he emphasized the individual's dignity and envisaged a society where everyone should be treated as an end in themselves and not for the means.

In society, many problems occur. Because human beings treat each other as their friends, fellow beings, and colleagues as a means for him or her to achieve certain ends. And that leads to the instrumental use of human relationships or human association. In contrast to that, Kant argued that all individuals had dignity and every other member of the society must acknowledge and respect that dignity. By that, he meant individuals should be treated as an end in themselves and not as a means for one to achieve certain other ends.

Among the nation-states also, he advocated a theory of perpetual peace and freedom without recourse to violence. And this we will discuss in the third lecture. He was also a strong

advocate of republicanism and cosmopolitanism. However, there is a challenge in understanding or reading Kant as a complex thinker. Almost impenetrable even for the advanced learner, not to say what the beginners and the ordinary people.

So, once you start reading Kant, you may find his idea, the way he developed his arguments somewhat cloudy in the sense of range or vastness of the subjects that he dealt with. He remained somewhat an impenetrable thinker. And in most of the universities, certainly at the undergrad level, you hardly find Kant being taught to the students. Kant remained an impenetrable thinker even for the advanced learners, not to say what the beginners and ordinary people.

In this sense, he was truly a philosophers' philosopher. That is for the advanced philosopher, Kant wrote these treatises. For our purpose in this course, we are going to focus on the secondary works of Kant and a few of his newspaper articles and essays. And one of them is his newspaper article, "What is enlightenment?" or what is Aufklärung? (12:05). An answer to the question, what is of Aufklärung? (12:08). That article, we are going to discuss today is the second part of the lecture.

But many of our discussions on Kant would be guided by the secondary literature that is available besides a few of his writings, essays, and articles in the newspapers. And also, one of his texts, "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals". We are going to deal with these texts on Kant. And through these texts, we will try to understand Kant's views on enlightenment, categorical imperative, state, politics, individual freedom, autonomy, and morality, and the theory of perpetual peace or 'kingdom of ends'. These are some of the themes that we are going to discuss Kant by looking at these texts.

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#### Kant: Intellectual Context

- Kant was developing his philosophy in the context of enlightenment and scientific revolution in Europe. The French revolution had influenced political discourse across the continent. There was a growing belief in science and reason for solving the challenges that humanity faced. Francis Bacon established the authority of science by arguing that 'knowledge is power'. Similarly, Rene Descartes establishing the authority of reason argued that human beings are rational and thinking subject. They can think and reason out their existence. These ideas are encapsulated in his famous dictum, 'I think. Therefore, I am'. The French philosopher Voltaire became synonymous with enlightenment thinking.
- Although, enlightenment has many traditions within, however, they all argued that all knowledge should be subjected to rational scrutiny. Parallel to rationalists, some empiricists proclaimed that all knowledge emanates from human experience. Major figures of this school were – David Hume, Locke, and others. Locke argued that 'all knowledge begins with experience'. Contrary to rationalists' belief, Locke argued that the mind is a blank slate (tabula rasa), which is then made to rationalize the self and the world based on experience. Thus, they argued about the limits of reason alone as the source of knowledge.
- However, there was a growing demand for unity and wholeness. Rationalists following Descartes, distinguished soul from the body, reason from feeling, reason from imagination, thought from senses, desire from the calculation, and so on. Excessive reliance on reason led to skepticism, and similarly, exclusive focus on experience had led to materialism. Kant's transcendental philosophy of ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics transcend such dichotomies between the two.

Now, if you look at the intellectual context of Kant, he was developing his philosophy in the context of enlightenment that was already started with the scientific revolution in astronomy, physics, mathematics, new modes of thinking about organizing individual and collective life. Kant was developing his philosophy in the context of enlightenment and scientific revolution in Europe. The French Revolution had a tremendous influence on the political discourse across the continent. So, most of the European states were ruled by the monarchy. And the French Revolution had established the desire for a republican form of government.

It was a transition time from one mode of thinking and organizing one's life individually and collectively to acquiring new modes of thinking, and theorization about knowledge, self, others, society, and politics as well. So, there was a kind of growing belief in science and reason for solving the challenges that humanity faced. It was also a time when human beings began to believe in the value of science and reason. And that saved our modernity. In belief, faith, or in religious dogmas or spirituality, in contrast to those modern ways of thinking began to know about knowledge, self, society, community, politics, economy, science, progress. Thus, one is guided by a kind of limitless faith in science and reason.

So, human beings for the first time during this era of enlightenment began to believe in the value of science and reason as the source or tool for solving all the challenges that humanity faced. Francis Bacon established the authority of science by arguing that knowledge is power. It is believed that to lead a good or dignified life, one needs to know. And knowledge empowers. Knowledge gives power to the individual, society, and there has to be a kind of

scientific basis for all forms of knowledge. So, Francis Bacon started this movement which is called establishing the authority of science.

Similarly, Rene Descartes established the authority of reason by arguing that human beings are rational and thinking subject. And there lies a kind of differentiation of the human species from other species on the planet. In comparison to animals or other species, human beings are considered to be endowed with reason and rationality. Thereby, human beings are thinking about being and that enables them to control or save the prospect that is there in an individual's life.

Descartes believed that human beings are rational and thinking subject. They can think and reason out their existence too. Human beings are capable of through the use of reason, setting the prospect of his life, for achieving progress individually and also at the collective level by organizing the society in a better manner on rational principle. Thereby, achieving prosperity and bringing about all around enlightenment in the life of humanity.

So, these ideas of human beings as rational or thinking subjects are encapsulated in his famous dictum. Rene Descartes said, "I think. Therefore, I am". The very definition or understanding of human being is based on this idea that human existence and identity is based on the fact that they are thinking being. And the ability to think makes a man what they call themselves as rational and enlightened men. The French philosopher, Voltaire, similarly was synonymous with enlightenment thinking. Kant was developing his philosophy in this context where there was excessive reliance or trust in the value of science and reason.

Although, enlightenment had many traditions within. One of the thinkers, we have discussed in this course, Rousseau was very critical of the excessive use of reason, belief in science, and arts as the basis of human progress. He was very skeptical of those kinds of values and regarded as an enlightenment thinker. Kant, similarly, while acknowledging the rule of reason and rationality, also established the limits of human knowledge. His critique of pure reason, practical reason, and judgment, all addressed the question of human reason, rationality, and knowledge, and the way it operates or functions and there are limits too.

However, they all argued that all knowledge should be subjected to rational scrutiny. And what does it mean by rational scrutiny? Particularly, in the time of social media let us say, where are all kinds of facts are presented to us. And it is very difficult for us to separate fact from fiction. And it is easy to believe the prevalent dogmas or strong beliefs that exist in

society. Now, these enlightenment thinkers argued, it was there when there were religious modes of thinking about the planetary system, human life, and earth, etc.

In contrast to that mode of knowledge and thinking, these enlightenment thinkers believed that all knowledge must be subjected to rational scrutiny. That means, challenging every belief, dogmas, practices in society in the light of reason. And the knowledge is based on this critical rational scrutiny of all forms of knowledge. Now, parallel to the rationalist, some empiricists proclaimed that all knowledge emanated not from independent human reason. But what they called the human experience. Thus, the major figures of these empiricists school were David Hume, Locke, and many others. And Locke argued that all knowledge began with the human experience.

And if you recall our lecture on Locke, we have discussed how human understanding is based on the human experience. So, contrary to the rationalist belief in human reason and rationality, Locke and other empiricists argued that the individual mind was a blank slate (or *tabula rasa*), made to rationalize the self and the world based on the human experience which human acquired throughout his life. Human understanding and knowledge was not something that emanates from his reason independent of his context or experience rather it was based on the empirical existence or experience of human beings. Thus, David Hume was the major proponent of this empiricist's school of thought.

Thus, they argued about the limits of reason alone as the source of knowledge. In contrast to the rationalist, empiricists thus argued that the role of human experience is the source of their knowledge or understanding of self or others in society. So, there is a kind of clear divide between the rationalist and their focus on reason and rationality, and empiricists, there focus on material context and human experience as the source of knowledge. It led to a kind of growing demand for unity or the wholeness of the human subject, their context, source, or true knowledge. And rationalists following Descartes created many distinctions or differences between the soul and body.

So, the mind and body is a kind of distinction or reason and feeling. In modernity, there is also this divide to know that to be enlightened, one needs to be rational. And to be rational is to do away with feelings, emotions, or passions. This kind of dichotomy created a divide in human subjectivity that led to many contradictions in society. So, there is a kind of demand for unifying these differences, and categorical differentiation between mind and body, soul

and the body, reason, and feeling, reason from the imagination, thought from senses, desire from the cold instrumental calculation through reason.

Thus, the rationalist engagement with reason and subjecting all forms of knowledge to this rational scrutiny led to kinds of differences. And against that, there was a demand for a kind of a unified or whole understanding of the human subject and society. So, excessive reliance on reason led to skepticism.

That means, you doubt everything like every prevalent custom, traditions, values, norms in the society. You are skeptical about everything. And you accept only those things which pass the rationality test subject to the dogmas, practices, prevalent in the society through reason. And once it passed that test, then you accept it. That means you are skeptical of all forms of authority, orders, norms in society. So, the excessive reliance on reason led to skepticism.

And similarly, exclusive focus on experience had led to materialism that what existed is only matter. Kant and his transcendental philosophy of ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics transcend such dichotomies between the two. And it is encapsulated in no matter and mind. There cannot be a kind of sharp distinction between the mind and the body, matter, and the reason. There is a kind of dialogic relationship between the two. So, on the one hand, you have in Kant, a kind of decisive establishment of reason as the only source of knowledge. And at the same time, it is explaining the limits of that knowledge.

There would be a world inaccessible to human perception or human imagination. That world is called a phenomenon. That is things in itself and this we will discuss in the next class. So, what one needs to understand that Kant's transcendental philosophy tries to transcend the dichotomies that exist between the materialists and empiricists, and the rationalists.



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#### Immanuel Kant (1724-1804): Brief Bio-sketch

- Immanuel Kant was born in Königsberg, Prussia, in 1724. He had a humble origin. His family was originally from Scotland, who settled in Prussia a hundred years before the birth of Kant. Except for a brief period for tutoring in a nearby village, Kant never left his native city, where he died in 1804. Kant's parents were pietists who believed in strict observance of religious practices and beliefs. It was perhaps, this influence, that although Kant outgrew the religious teachings in his adult life, but never lost trust in faith even when he argued that reason is the basis of true knowledge.
- In 1755, Kant was appointed as a private lecturer at the University of Königsberg. He was made a full professor of logic and metaphysics in 1770. He turned out to be a great teacher and most distinguished professor at the University. Also, a good conversationalist who loved to surround himself with friends, Kant lived a very meticulously organized and disciplined life. Every activity in his life had a fixed timing. One of the biographers wrote that his daily routine was like a series of verbs 'rising, coffee-drinking, writing, lecturing, dining, walking'. He was so punctual that it is said that his neighbor used to set their clock by observing Kant's activities, chief of them was his post-dinner walks among the linden trees (which is still known as 'philosophers walk').
- His life was exclusively devoted to the pursuit of knowledge. He was trying to understand and explain its limits and functions. He used to accomplish the tasks he set for himself by sheer perseverance. He was so preoccupied with the pursuit of knowledge, its source, limits, and functioning that he considered marriage as a distraction and source of corruption. And, therefore, he never married.

Now, if you look at the personal life of Immanuel Kant which is very boring if you like or a kind of dull life. It was all set beforehand and Kant subjected himself merely to following those daily routines. Kant was born in Königsberg in Prussia in 1724. He had a humble origin. And his family was settled in Prussia migrated from Scotland, 100 years before the birth of Kant. And except for a brief period of tutoring in a nearby village, Kant never left his native city that is Königsberg. He had his education and he spent all his life in the city without moving out of that city even for once.

And he had a great interest in anthropology, geography, territories, different lands, countries. But never in his life, Kant moved out of his native city, where he died in 1804. Kant's parents were pietists who believed in the strict observance of religious practices and beliefs. And it was perhaps this influence on Kant in his early childhood, particularly from his mother, that Kant although outgrew the religious teachings in his adult life. But never lost trust in faith even when he argued that reason is the basis of true knowledge.

And that we will see how he developed those ideas while Rousseau had not rejected the faith or intuitive understanding of human passion. So, Kant in that sense was a complex thinker to frame him either as a rationalist or someone like Rousseau counter the enlightenment thinker. Kant remained a quintessential enlightenment thinker. But in his way. In many complex strains of thought is there in his critique. The most famous like a critique of pure reason, practical reason, and judgment.

In 1755, Kant was appointed as a private lecturer at the University of Königsberg, the same city where he lived and he studied. He was made a full professor of logic and metaphysics in 1770. And he turned out to be a great teacher and the most distinguished professor at the University. And there used to be a great admiration for his teachings. The way he used to explain concepts, thinkers, and ideas in the class. Herder wrote about those things in his memories of Kant and his method of teaching. He was a great teacher. And he developed his philosophical articulation much later in his life at the age of 57.

He was a good conversationalist who loved to surround himself with friends. But he led a kind of isolated life and feared any kind of intimate relationship or interference from the other. Kant lived a meticulously organized and disciplined life. And every activity in his life had a fixed timing. One of the biographers wrote that his daily routine was like a series of verbs 'rising, coffee-drinking, writing, lecturing, dining and walking'. So, most of his life, Kant followed this routine meticulously without deviating from it. He used to rise early in the morning, had coffee, used to prepare the notes or write his lectures, then giving the lecture, dining, and walking. That was the daily routine of Kant.

He was so punctual in following this routine that it said his neighbor used to set their clock by observing Kant's activity. So, at 3:30 he used to go for a walk. And everyone in his neighborhood would know by looking at Kant or his work that it is 3:30. He was so meticulous and disciplined in following the routine. Chief of them was his post-dinner works among the linden trees (which is still known as 'philosophers walk'). His life was exclusively devoted to the pursuit of knowledge. And he was trying to understand and explain the limits, and functions of knowledge as I said at the beginning of this lecture. The primary concern for Kant was to understand what is the functioning or operation of knowledge and what are its limits?

So, what are the things that human beings can know? And what are the things that will remain outside the domain of human knowledge? He used to accomplish the tasks he set for himself by sheer perseverance. Once he started a task, no matter how much time it would take. But he would accomplish it. He was so preoccupied with the pursuit of knowledge, its sources, limits, and functioning that he considered marriage as a distraction and source of corruption. And therefore, he never married.

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➤ Königsberg became a center of enlightenment during the reign of Friedrich the Great and his able minister of education von Zedlitz. However, there was a decisive shift during the reign of his successor Frederick William II and his minister of education, Woellner. They wanted to reestablish religion and censored any publications critical to religion or faith. He wrote against Kant to the King, which forced Kant to take a pledge that he would not engage in any discussions on religion publicly – through writing or teaching.

➤ Kant lived a life of the mind, truly and passionately. He overcame many of his physical frailties. He continued to give lectures toward the end of his life. He lived his life according to the principle mentioned in the *Critique of Practical Reason* – ‘Two things fill the heart with the renewed and increasing awe and reverence...the starry firmament above and the moral law within’. It also sums up his philosophy of morality, autonomy, and freedom too, which we will discuss in the next lecture. Despite living under a monarchy, Kant was a great admirer of the French Revolution and republican values.

➤ Kant wrote his first major work, *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781, at the age of 57. In the next ten years, he wrote epoch-making works in philosophy, metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics such as *Groundwork of the metaphysics of Morals* (1785), *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), *Critique of Judgement* (1790). He contributed to other areas, too, such as politics, arts, religion, faith, and so on. However, his chief concern was to examine the operations and limits of reason, rationality, and knowledge. In doing so, he rescued reason from skepticism and faith from blind worshipping and submissions. He did not write any major political treatise. His political ideas are scattered in his numerous articles and essays.

In fact, on two occasions, he came close to have it. But he took so much time. So, every action in Kant's life was based on thorough consideration and reflection about the consequences of those actions. He used to take a long time before he committed to something or set a task for himself. And once he set it, without consideration of its consequences, he used to accomplish it. It was about the marriage that he took so much time that it never materialized. During Kant's times, Königsberg became a center of enlightenment, particularly, during the reign of Frederick the Great, and his able minister of education Von Zedlitz.

However, there was a kind of decisive shift from this enlightenment approach of Frederick the Great and his education minister Von Zedlitz. During the time and reign of his successor, Frederick Williams II, and his minister of education, Woellner who believed in the role of religion and religious beliefs in organizing life. The successor of Frederick the Great wanted to re-establish religion and censored any publication which was critical to religion or faith. So, the enlightenment thinking if you like which believed in the reason, their main target was the religious dogmas and beliefs. It wanted all forms of religious dogmas and beliefs to be subjected to rational and critical scrutiny.

Now, these successors of Frederick the Great wanted to re-establish the religion and therefore censored any publication that was critical to religion or faith. So, his education minister, Woellner was against Kant who forced Kant to take a pledge that he would not engage in any discussion on religion publicly- through writings or teaching. Kant lived the life of the mind truly and passionately. He overcame many of his physical frailties and continued to give

lectures towards the end of his life. He lived his life, according to the principle that is mentioned in his 'Critique of Practical Reason', that is- "Two things fill the heart with the renewed and increasing awe and reverence...these are the starry firmament above and the moral law within'. Thus, the source of moral law for Kant was not outside.

So, there is a starry firmament above and the moral law within. These are the two major sources of guiding human acts and human knowledge, human understanding, and how society organizes its life collectively. And how peace can be maintained or achieved among the community of the nations or states. This idea of the two principal sums of his philosophy of morality, autonomy, and freedom, we are going to discuss in the next lecture.

Despite living under a monarchy, Kant was a great admirer of the French Revolution and republican values. Kant wrote his first major work that is philosophical work which we called 'Critique of Pure Reason' in 1781 at the age of 57. So, no philosopher took so much time to articulate and write, his first treatises at the ripe age of 57. And in the next 10 years, he wrote epoch-making works in philosophy, metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics such as 'Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals' which was a preparatory work to other works on morality. That he wrote in 1785. The 'Critique of Practical Reason' was written in 1788. And the 'Critique of Judgment' was written in 1790.

He contributed to other areas as well. But his major concern was this 'Critique of Pure Reason', 'Critique of Practical Reason', and 'Critique of Judgment'. These are the three major works which outlined the functioning and limits of knowledge, and human reason and rationality. Besides them, Kant also contributed to other areas such as politics, arts, religion, and faith. However, his chief concern was to examine the operation and limits of reason, rationality, and human knowledge. And in doing so, he rescued reason from skepticism and faith from blind worshipping and submission.

So, for religion or faith, he provided a kind of rational basis, rather than blindly following or blindly worshipping. He did not write any major political treatise and most of his political ideas that we will discuss are scattered in his numerous newspaper articles and essays.

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**Enlightenment: The Age of Reason**

- The term enlightenment is usually referred to as the age of reason, but it covers several ideas and intellectual traditions. It was made up of various and often conflicting strains of thought. However, what binds enlightenment thinkers together was an attitude of mind, a mood rather than a common body of ideas in which human reason and self-actualization were given primacy over other things.
- Growth of self-consciousness, increasing awareness of the power of man's mind to subject himself and the world to rational analysis, was the dominant feature of enlightenment. The faith in the power of reason to investigate successfully not only nature but also man and society was the dominant feature of enlightenment. They argued that not only could politics be subjected to rational scrutiny, but political arrangements and institutions could be reconstituted along the rational lines as well. The critical attitude towards authority led to the constant questioning of all accepted values, particularly those of religion.
- The creative fusion of scientific investigation, the Cartesian transformation of philosophy, and classical revival shaped the discourse of enlightenment. Scientific revolution – Copernicus and Kepler in astronomy, Galileo and Newton in physics, Descartes and Leibnitz in mathematics – was significant, as it emphasized the point that observation and evidence should be the basis of all knowledge.

Now, let us discuss this idea of enlightenment or the age of reason. The term enlightenment is usually referred to as the age of reason. So, what is enlightenment? It is the age of reason. That means reason, rationality is the only source of knowledge or only basis of any true knowledge. However, when you look at the enlightenment tradition in Europe, it covered several ideas and intellectual traditions that were made up of various and often conflicting strains of thought. There was a difference between German enlightenment from the french enlightenment to Scottish enlightenment. And there were various strands of thought within this overall project of enlightenment.

However, what bind these enlightenment thinkers together was an attitude of mind and mood rather than a common body of ideas in which human reason and self-actualization were given primacy over other things. So, in all the enlightenment thinkers, what you will find is the primacy of the individual and how that individual will actualize his or her self through the use of reason. And that was given primacy to everything else.

Even the political organization, state, nation, community, the economy should pave the way for the individual to actualize himself or herself. And that is in a way, some sort of the whole modernity project. That is the state, market, economy, community everything is there for the self-actualization of an individual. And only that individual is capable of actualizing himself or herself who is capable or daring enough to use his/her reason rather than guided by the reason or other guarding classes. And this we will discuss when we discuss Kant's views on enlightenment.

So, that sums up the varied strains of thought in the enlightenment that they gave primacy to the human reason and self-actualization over everything else. The growth of self-consciousness, increasing awareness of the power of man's mind to subject himself in the world to rational analysis were the dominant features of enlightenment. If you try to understand what was enlightenment? It was this growing self-awareness or increasing understanding or faith in the human mind that would subject himself or the world to rational analysis.

The faith in the power of reason to investigate successfully not only nature. But also men and society were the dominant features of enlightenment. And it was this feature which helps human beings to take control of his or her life. In the beginning, especially, if you look at physics or natural sciences, their idea was how to use nature or control or tame nature through engineering or other domain of scientific knowledge. It was to achieve human control or mastery over nature. But enlightenment was not just about human mastery or control or taming of nature. But also, how to organize society and self according to the rational principle. And that is the whole motto of enlightenment.

They argued that not only politics be subjected to rational scrutiny. But political arrangements and institutions could be reconstituted along the rational lines as well. So, the whole basis of state and government in modern times is based on the consent of people. And these people as individuals are considered to be rational knowing what is in their best interest. And therefore, choosing the government which is best suitable to serve their interests. The whole political arrangement in a way is based on this enlightenment thinking of human beings or the power of human reason as the source of human action for organizing life in a better manner which will provide the individual space for self-actualization.

The critical attitude towards authority, particularly, religious authority led to the constant questioning of all accepted values, those of the religious values and beliefs. So, what brings enlightenment, what brings the age of reason are the constant scrutiny or challenge to all forms of authority, beliefs, and prevalent dogmas. Thus, the creative fusion of scientific investigation, the Cartesian transformation of philosophy, and classical revival shaped the discourse of enlightenment.

The scientific revolutions such as Copernicus and Kepler in astronomy, Galileo and Newton in physics, Descartes, and Leibnitz in mathematics were significant as they were emphasizing the point that human observation and evidence should be the basis of all knowledge. And it



was not just applied to science and scientific inquiry. But also, in the domain of philosophy and the knowledge of society or the human self.

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**Kant: On Enlightenment**

- Kant is rightly regarded as the 'most explicit and articulate exponent' of enlightenment tradition. He defined enlightenment as human beings coming out of their self-imposed immaturity conditions. This immaturity conditions, according to Kant, are not the result of lack of knowledge or understanding, 'but in a lack of determination and courage to use it without the assistance of another'. The motto of enlightenment, therefore, was *sapere aude* (dare to know), i.e., 'have the courage to use your own understanding'.
- Kant was a strong advocate of public use of reason or rationality to bring about enlightenment and progress. A great portion of men, according to him, remains in the lifelong conditions of immaturity. It almost becomes their nature. According to Kant, no revolution can change this condition except freedom. And freedom is to use 'reason publicly in all matters' without restraints.
- However, he also argued that unrestrained use of reason and rationality could lead to chaos or anarchy. To avoid that, he makes a distinction between private and public use of reason. He allowed unrestrained use of reason or rational faculty on public matters. However, in their personal capacity, individuals must obey the laws and established procedures in society. For example, one can question the tax authority in public; however, so long such law exists they must pay the tax.

Now, Kant particularly defined enlightenment and became a synonymous figure with enlightenment or rationality project. And he was rightly regarded as the 'most explicit and articulate exponent' of enlightenment tradition in Europe. And he defined enlightenment in a very distinct and particular way which was definite from the empiricist led materialism and rationalist laid skepticism before Kant. So, there was an agreement on the use of human reason and science as the basis of true knowledge. But there was a kind of diversion or differences between the empiricists or rationalist, and between the skepticism and the materialism.

But Kant provided a very definite answer to what is enlightenment for the individual being and how one could achieve enlightenment at the collective or societal level. So, Kant defined enlightenment as human beings coming out of their self-imposed immaturity condition. And this point we need to discuss. It is convenient for us to be guided by the existing practices, values, and norms in society. And in doing so, we do not take the trouble and there is no danger of encountering anyone in society. We just follow the norms prevalent in society. That could not bring about the enlightenment.

And human beings lived mostly kind of slaves or subject life to the pre-existing norms and values in society. That man could not be enlightened. And without men being enlightened, how we could bring enlightenment at the collective level or how we could bring about the enlightened. So, Kant defined enlightenment as human beings' capability or a daring or

courageous move to come out of their self-imposed state; self-imposed in a sense that nobody tells them to do that. But they just follow it because it was prevalent and convenient. Why think? Why to critically engage with the prevalent norms and practices in society? and thereby endangering one's life or endangering the prospect of one's life.

So, it is easy, convenient to lead one's life according to the prevalent notion and norms. This immaturity condition is to be dependent on the norms and values that are set by others in society. And one does not engage rationally, or critically with forming the imperative that will guide your action. This condition is dependent on norms and values that are set by others in the society is immaturity condition and this immaturity condition is self-imposed and men cannot be enlightened if they live in this self-imposed immaturity condition. Thus, enlightenment for men, according to Kant, is their ability to come out of this self-imposed immaturity condition.

This immaturity condition, according to Kant, was not the result of a lack of knowledge or understanding. It was not that human beings did not understand which norms were bad, or good, which norms were desirable or undesirable. It is simply their lack of courage to follow what they think was right. It was the lack of determination and courage to use one's reason, understanding, or knowledge without the assistance of another. So, the motto of enlightenment, according to Kant is, therefore, this 'sapare aude' that dares to know or know for yourself. And do not understand something because it is said by others or it is said by the society or simply it is dominant in society or accepted by the majority in society.

You must base all your knowledge and understanding, on your reason. So, 'sapare aude' that dares to know becomes the motto of enlightenment. That is, dare to use your understanding and not the understanding that is prevalent in society. Kant was a strong advocate of the public use of reason or rationality to bring enlightenment and progress at the collective level. Kant made a distinction between the private or public use of reason. And without entering into chaos or anarchy. Because the excessive use of reason leads to skepticism and critique of all forms of social and political authority.

To avoid that, he makes it very clear and ambiguous in a way the distinction between the public and private spheres of life. He argued that a great portion of men remains in the lifelong condition of immaturity. Because it is convenient and it is easy. Once you use your reason and then once you subject your action according to that reason or understanding, you



will create trouble with others in society. But if you follow the norms that are prevalent in society, then life is easy and more convenient. Society will remain as they are.

Now, to bring about enlightenment is to use one's reason and have the courage to abide by or follow that reason. So, a great portion of men, according to Kant, remained in the lifelong condition of immaturity. And it almost became their nature. Why they do it? Just it is prevalent in society and followed by the majority in society. Not because of their mind or their rational thinking, intellect tells them it is right. According to Kant, no revolution could change this condition except freedom. And freedom, he defined in a very distinct sense. It is to use 'reason publicly in all matters' without restraints.

However, he also argued that unrestrained use of reason and rationality could lead to chaos or anarchy in the society. And to avoid that he made a distinction between the private and public use of reason. He allowed the unrestrained use of reason or rational faculty on public matters. So, in a personal capacity or personal sphere of life, an individual must obey the laws and established procedure. But publicly as an intellectual scholar, he should have complete freedom to scrutinize those actions and procedures.

Let us take an example. One can question the tax authority in public because of excessive tax or the challenges or limits of that tax system. However, so long as such tax laws exist that person must pay the tax. Let us think of this public and private in other ways. Suppose, one individual is in the army. And when in operation as an army man, he must obey the command of his superiors. But as a scholar, that means as a public person, as an intellectual, he should have unrestrained freedom to criticize the command of his commander.

Now, that becomes a kind of ambiguous. How the same person can lead this dual life of a private, personal, professional life of an army man or clergy or XYZ in the administrative structure of the society? But the same men then should also publicly as a scholar or intellectual express his opinions about a particular action or tax or a procedure or particular laws to bring about enlightenment at the collective level. So, I mean, it is the kind of paradox that you have seen in Rousseau's thought- 'man is born free but everywhere he is in chains'. Men can be free. And that freedom can be achieved by forcing the men to follow the general will.

Similarly, Kant acknowledged the existence of paradoxes in society. So, he wanted the use of reason. But excessive use of reason may lead to chaos and anarchy. To prevent that one has to make a kind of delicate balance between the personal life as a citizen, as the army men, as

clergy, or what XYZ in the administrative structure. But as a public person, as a scholar and intellectual, he or she should have unrestrained freedom to criticize any laws and actions. And there should not be any limits to such public exercise of freedom. And this is the public use of reason that would bring about enlightenment and progress in society.

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➤ To the question, whether we live in an enlightened age, Kant's answer was a categorical no. Nonetheless, he agreed that we do live in the age of enlightenment. He argued that so long there are hindrances and obstacles to the public use of reason, enlightenment could not be achieved. And to remove those restraints, he wanted absolute freedom for the citizens as scholars and intellectuals. Now, one could ask whether society as a whole can achieve enlightenment? Its answer is debatable. 1

➤ Kant envisioned a very different kind of society and individuals where individuals will be moral, autonomous, and free. They would treat each other as ends in themselves, thereby recognizing the dignity of each. It would be, according to Kant, a kingdom of perpetual peace where men would be guided by their moral sense of duty, which they set for themselves through the use of reason.

➤ Thus for the attainment of enlightenment, Kant argued for the complete and unrestrained freedom of thought. But, he did so in a manner that individual would be guided by their moral and rational sense of duty, rather than personal interests.

To the question of whether we live in the enlightened is where you know, there is unrestrained freedom to use reason publicly on all matters, Kant's answer was a categorical no. We do not live in an enlightened age. Enlightened age is that stage in society where there is unrestrained freedom to use reason publicly on all matters. We do not leave or have achieved that stage of life. Because there are so many dogmas or prevalent notions or rules that guide or curtails that freedom to use reason publicly.

So, his answer that whether we live in an enlightened age or not? His answer was no. Nonetheless, he agreed that we did live in the age of enlightenment. There is a distinction between enlightened age that is achieved at a certain stage of life, where it is permitted to use your reason in all matters publicly. Enlightenment is the age where you subject all forms of knowledge to human rational scrutiny. He argued that so long there were hindrances and obstacles to the public use of reason, enlightenment could not be achieved or enlightened age could not be achieved. It is only possible when we remove those hindrances and obstacles.

In many societies, particularly, those in the authority or in the position of authority whether it is a religious or political authority or even in the scientific inquiry, certain paradigms if it operates within paradigms, they will not allow you to argue something which challenges the very basis. However, the knowledge progressed when this unrestrained freedom of thought

and expression of those thoughts. Thus, enlightenment is about that in every sphere of life whether public, political, economic, and social.

Now, to remove those restraints cherished by those who are in a position of power and authority, they do not want all kinds of opinions to be expressed. Because that may endanger their authority. So, think about the church or religious authority against whom all these kinds of intellectual development were taking place that challenged the very foundation of religious knowledge and religious argument. There were the restraints or hindrances to allow human beings to express their opinion publicly on all matters. And to remove those restraints, Kant wanted absolute freedom for the citizens as scholars, as public persons, or intellectuals. He should be free to express his opinion publicly on all matters. There should not be any kind of restraints.

Now, one could ask this question whether society as a whole can achieve enlightenment? Its answer is debatable. Because men being men will be guided by their own subjective, historical, political context and not necessarily use their reason to develop his or her understanding. Even when they have their own understanding, they may lack the courage to follow them. And so long as the lack that courage, one cannot bring about enlightenment, even at the individual level. It is tough to bring about enlightenment at the collective or the level of society.

Kant envisioned a very different kind of society and individuals where individuals will be moral, autonomous, and free to use his or her reason. And they would treat each other as an end in themselves, thereby recognizing the dignity of each. It would be according to Kant, a kingdom of perpetual peace where men would be guided by their moral sense of duty which they set for themselves through the use of reason. There is a kind of deontological basis like a kind of selfless legislation of those laws which govern individual actions. And this we will discuss in the next class while discussing the 'categorical imperative'.

Thus, for the attainment of enlightenment, Kant argued for the complete and unrestrained freedom of thought on public matters. But he did so in a manner that individuals would be guided by their moral and rational sense of duty rather than their interest that we see in the modern industrial society. So, that is all in the lecture, today.

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To read some of the texts on Kant and to know more about his personal life, his philosophical treatises, and particularly his views on enlightenment, you can refer to some of these texts like Gary Browning which is a kind of interpretation of his views on enlightenment, his views on knowledge, reason, and rationality. So, you can refer to Gary Browning's text. The title of the text is *A History of Modern Political Thought: The Question of Interpretation*.

Paul Guyer's text is a good compilation of articles on Kant which is *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy*. From Otfried Hoff, you can read *Immanuel Kant*, which is translated by Marshall Farrier. You can read certainly this text by Immanuel Kant, 'What is Enlightenment?' It is a three-piece newspaper article. And the discussion that we have is based on this particular text on: 'What is Enlightenment?' in Mary J Gregor edited, *Immanuel Kant's, Practical Philosophy*, from the Cambridge University Press.

You can also refer to Immanuel Kant's, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. And Hans Reiss is a very good text on *Kant: Political Writings*. And Roger Scruton, *Kant: A Very Short Introduction*, you can read to understand more about Kantian views on enlightenment, his personal life, and many other topics that we will discuss on Kant. That is all in this lecture today. Do share your views and feedback. We will be very happy to respond. Thanks for listening.