

DBQ 6: Enlightenment Thinkers and Their Impact on European Rulers (Chapters 17 and 18)

Question: Assess the extent to which Enlightenment philosophy influenced European rulers in the eighteenth century.

Document 1

Source: The Enlightenment in Europe.



Document 2

Source: John Locke, English, *Two Treatises on Government*, 1690.

A state also of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another; there being nothing more evident, than that creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another without subordination or subjection, unless the lord and master of them all should, by any manifest declaration of his will, set one above another, and confer on him, by an evident and clear appointment, an undoubted right to dominion and sovereignty.

Document 3

Source: Baron de Montesquieu, French, *The Spirit of the Laws*, 1748.

In every government there are three sorts of power; the legislative; the executive, in respect to things dependent on the law of nations; and the judicial, in regard to things that depend on the civil law. . . . When the legislative and executive powers are united in the same person, or in the same body of magistrates, there can be no liberty; because apprehensions may arise, lest the same monarch or senate should enact tyrannical laws, to execute them in a tyrannical manner.

Document 4

Source: David Hume, Scottish, *Of the Dignity or Meanness of Human Nature*, 1752.

In forming our notions of human nature, we are apt to make a comparison between men and animals. . . . Certainly this comparison is favorable to mankind. On the one hand, we see a creature, whose thoughts are not limited by any narrow bounds. . . . On the other hand, we are presented with a creature the very reverse of this; limited in its observations and reasonings to a few sensible objects which surround it.

Document 5

Source: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, French, *The Social Contract*, 1762.

To renounce liberty is to renounce being a man, to surrender the rights of humanity and even its duties. For him who renounces everything no indemnity is possible. Such a renunciation is incompatible with man's nature; to remove all liberty from his will is to remove all morality from his acts. Finally, it is an empty and contradictory convention that sets up, on the one side, absolute authority, and, on the other, unlimited obedience. Is it not clear that we can be under no obligation to a person from whom we have the right to exact everything?

Document 6

Source: Catherine II, empress of Russia, Decree on Serfs, 1767.

The Governing Senate . . . has deemed it necessary to make known . . . that the landlords' serfs and peasants . . . owe their landlords proper submission and absolute obedience in all matters, according to the laws . . . which provide that all persons who dare to incite serfs and peasants to disobey their landlords shall be arrested and taken to the nearest government office, there to be punished forthwith as disturbers of the public tranquility, according to the laws and without leniency. And should it so happen that even after the publication of the present decree of Her Imperial Majesty any serfs and peasants should cease to give the proper obedience to their landlords . . . and should make bold to submit unlawful petitions complaining of their landlords, and especially to petition Her Imperial Majesty personally, then both those who make the complaints and those who write up the petitions shall be punished by the knout and forthwith deported to Nerchinsk to penal servitude for life.

Document 7

Source: Voltaire, French, *Lettres philosophiques*, 1778.

No one is exempted in this country [England] from paying certain taxes because he is a nobleman or a priest. All duties and taxes are settled by the House of Commons, whose power is greater than that of the Peers, though inferior to it in dignity. The spiritual as well as temporal Lords have the liberty to reject a Money Bill brought in by the Commons; but they are not allowed to alter anything in it, and must either pass or throw it out without restriction. When the Bill has passed the Lords and is signed by the king, then the whole nation pays, every man in proportion to his revenue or estate, not according to his title, which would be absurd. There is no such thing as an arbitrary subsidy or poll-tax, but a real tax on the lands, of all which an estimate was made in the reign of the famous King William III.

Document 8

Source: Frederick II, king of Prussia, *Essay on Forms of Government and Testament Politique*, 1770.

Rulers should always remind themselves that they are men like the least of their subjects. The sovereign is the foremost judge, general, financier, and minister of his country, not merely for the sake of his prestige. Therefore, he should perform with care the duties connected with these offices. He is merely the principal servant of the State. Hence, he must act with honesty, wisdom, and complete disinterestedness in such a way that he can render an account of his stewardship to the citizens at any moment. . . . However, we have too many Jews in the towns. They are needed on the Polish border because in these areas Hebrews alone perform trade. As soon as you get away from the frontier, the Jews become a disadvantage, they form cliques, they deal in contraband and get up to all manner of rascally tricks which are detrimental to Christian burghers and merchants.

Document 9

Source: Joseph II, Holy Roman Emperor, The Serfdom Patent, 1781.

Patent of November 1, 1781, *in re* Manorial Lords and Subjects. The servile status of subjects is herewith abolished completely and the following dispositions enacted:

1. Any subject is entitled to marry, subject to previous notification and acquisition of a certificate, to be delivered free of charge.
2. He may, provided he observes the regulations governing conscription for military service, leave his present manor and settle or take service on another within the Province; but if he wishes to establish himself as a peasant cultivator or cottager on another manor, he must ask for a leaving certificate, which must also be issued him free of charge, to be shown to the new manorial authority.
3. A subject is free to learn any handicraft, trade, etc., and seek his livelihood where he will. For this no leaving permit is necessary.
4. Subjects are no longer required to perform domestic service for their lords, except orphans, who may be required to do such service for a period not exceeding three years.
5. No services shall be imposed on or required of subjects beyond the robot* and payments in kind and cash attaching to their holdings. Subjects are bound to render obedience to their lords in virtue of the existing laws.

*The robot was three days of unpaid labor a week, although many serfs worked every day except Sunday.

Document 10

Source: Satirical Depiction of the Closing of Monasteries as Decreed by Joseph II in the Year 1781, c. 1783.

