

Enlightenment Thinkers Challenge Traditional Authority

Kant - What is Enlightenment, 1784

	Main idea/argument in ten or fewer words	How does this threaten tradition authority? Explain both how and which form.
<p>A. Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage. Nonage is the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance. This nonage is self-imposed if its cause lies not in lack of understanding but in indecision and lack of courage to use one's own mind without another's guidance. Dare to know! (Sapere aude.) "Have the courage to use your own understanding," is therefore the motto of the enlightenment.</p>		
<p>B. Laziness and cowardice are the reasons why such a large part of mankind gladly remain minors all their lives, long after nature has freed them from external guidance. They are the reasons why it is so easy for others to set themselves up as guardians. It is so comfortable to be a minor. If I have a book that thinks for me, a pastor who acts as my conscience, a physician who prescribes my diet, and so on--then I have no need to exert myself. I have no need to think, if only I can pay; others will take care of that disagreeable business for me. Those guardians who have kindly taken supervision upon themselves see to it that the overwhelming majority of mankind--among them the entire fair sex--should consider the step to maturity, not only as hard, but as extremely dangerous. . . . These guardians make their domestic cattle stupid and carefully prevent the docile creatures from taking a single step without the leading-strings to which they have fastened them.</p>		
<p>C. Thus we observe here as elsewhere in human affairs, in which almost everything is paradoxical, a surprising and unexpected course of events: a large degree of civic freedom appears to be of advantage to the intellectual freedom of the people, yet at the same time it establishes insurmountable barriers. . . . Nature, then, has carefully cultivated the seed within the hard core--namely the urge for and the vocation of free thought. And this free thought gradually . . . [makes] men become more and more capable of acting in freedom. At last free thought acts even on the fundamentals of government and the state finds it agreeable to treat man, who is now more than a machine, in accord with his dignity.</p>		

Which value(s) of democracy are most reflected in this document? Explain in 25 words.
