

Humanities 4: Lecture 13

Immanuel Kant

“What is Enlightenment?”

Outline of Lecture

- Historical Background
- “What is Enlightenment?”
 - Main claim
 - Public vs. private use of reason
 - Political Analysis
- Summary

Prussia in 18th Century

- Rise of Prussia
 - Efficient bureaucracy & tax collection, large standing military (83K-200K), potatoes.
- Series of kings:
 - Frederick I (1688-1713), Frederick William (1713-40), Frederick II=Frederick the Great (1740-86)
- Seven Years' War (1756-1763) (See slide)
- Enlightened Absolutism
 - Freedom of religion
 - Limited freedom of speech







What is Enlightenment?

- Main claim:
 - “Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity”
 - Immaturity-inability to use understanding without others
 - Self-incurred-if due to lack of resolution and courage
- Causes:
 - Laziness and cowardice
 - Dogmas and formulas- “mechanical instruments for rational use”
- Remedy: (internally) courage, (externally) freedom

Kinds of Freedom

- Public vs. private use of reason
 - Private use is in some official capacity
 - Public use is for the “reading public”.
- Consistent with obedience in actions
- Emphasis on religious freedom
 - Religious immaturity is most pernicious.
- Political freedom is also included.
- Fundamental dignity of man.
 - vs. man as machine (part of state)

Political Analysis

- Repeated Flattery
 - Enlightened ruler with no fear.
 - “the century of Frederick”
- Assurances of no danger
 - Strong army provides security.
 - Enlightenment should be gradual and not take form of revolution.
- Advantages
 - Possibly better ways of legislation.
 - People emerge from “barbarism”.

Summary

- Self-conscious attempt at understanding the Enlightenment.
- Freedom of speech in the public sphere is essential.
- Reason should provide the standards for public discourse.