

## **KANT ON ENLIGHTENMENT**

### **(1) Critique of Pure Reason (1781)**

["Preface," A xii]: "Our age is, in especial degree, the age of criticism, and to criticism everything must submit. Religion through its sanctity, and law-giving through its majesty, may seek to exempt themselves from it. But they then awaken just suspicion, and cannot claim the sincere respect which reason accords only to that which has been able to sustain the test of free and open examination."

["The Discipline of Pure Reason," A738/B766]: "Reason must subject itself to critique in all its undertakings, and cannot restrict the freedom of critique through any prohibition without damaging itself and drawing upon itself a disadvantageous suspicion. Now there is nothing so important because of its utility, nothing so holy, that it may be exempted from this searching review and inspection, which knows no respect for persons. The very existence of reason depends upon this freedom, which has no dictatorial authority, but whose claim is never anything more than the agreement of free citizens, each of whom must be able to express his reservations, indeed even his *veto*, without holding back."

["The Discipline of Pure Reason," A747/B775]: "It would be absurd to look to reason for enlightenment, and yet to prescribe beforehand which side it must necessarily favor."

["The Discipline of Pure Reason," A752/B780]: "This freedom [of ours which is consistent with the same freedom of others] will carry with it the right to submit openly for discussion the thoughts and doubts which we find ourselves unable to resolve, and to do so without being decried as troublesome and dangerous citizens. This is one of the original *rights of human reason*, which recognizes no other judge than that *universal human reason* in which everyone has his say. And since all improvement of which our state is capable must be obtained from this source, such a right is sacred and must not be curtailed."

### **(2) "What is Enlightenment?" (1784)**

"*Enlightenment is man's exit from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to make use of one's own understanding without the guidance of another. This inability is self-incurred if its cause lies not in the lack of understanding, but rather in the lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another. Sapere aude! Have the courage to use your own understanding! is the motto of the enlightenment.*

Laziness and cowardice are the causes why such a great part of mankind, long after nature has set them free from the guidance of others, still gladly remain immature for life and why it is so easy for others to set themselves up as guardians. It is so comfortable to be immature. If I have a book that understands for me, a pastor who has a conscience for me, a doctor who decides my diet for me, etc., I do not need to trouble myself at all. I have no need to think, if only I can pay; others will take over the tedious business for me."

### **(3) "What is Orientation in Thinking?" (1786) [Ak. 8: 146n] [final paragraph of the essay]**

"Friends of the human race and of what is holiest to it! Accept what appears to you most worthy of belief after careful and sincere examination, whether of facts or rational grounds; only do not dispute that prerogative of reason which makes it the highest good on earth, the prerogative of being the final touchstone of truth.\* Failing here, you will become unworthy of this freedom, and you will surely forfeit it too..."

[\*Kant's note: "*Thinking for oneself* means seeking the supreme touchstone of truth in oneself (i.e., in one's own reason); and the maxim of always thinking for oneself is **enlightenment**. Now there is less to this than people imagine when they place enlightenment in the acquisition of *information* [*Kenntnisse*], for it is rather a negative principle in the use of one's faculty of cognition, and often he who is richest in information is the least enlightened in the use he makes of it. To make use of one's own reason means no more than to ask oneself, whenever one is supposed to assume something, whether one could find it feasible to make the ground or the rule of which one assumes it into a universal principle for the use of reason. Everyone can apply this test to himself; and when it is carried out, superstition and zealotry will be seen to vanish immediately, even if the individual in question does not have nearly enough knowledge to refute them on objective grounds. For he is merely employing the maxim of the *self-preservation* [*Selbsterhaltung*] of reason. It is consequently very easy to lay the basis of enlightenment in *individual subjects* by means of education; one must merely begin at an early stage to accustom young minds to this reflection. To enlighten an *age*, however, is a very protracted process; for there are numerous external obstacles which either preclude that mode of education or make it more difficult to implement."

### **(4) Critique of Judgment (1790), §40: "On Taste as a Kind of *Sensus Communis*" [Ak. 5: 293-96]**

"This common human understanding, which is merely man's sound (but not yet cultivated) understanding, is regarded as the very least that we are entitled to expect from anyone who lays claim to the name of human being. [...] The following maxims may serve to elucidate its principles: (1) to think for oneself; (2) to think from the standpoint of everyone else; and (3) to think always consistently. The first is the maxim of an unprejudiced, the second of a broadened, the third of a consistent way of thinking. The first is the maxim of a reason that is never passive. A propensity to a passive reason, and hence to a heteronomy of reason, is called prejudice; and the greatest prejudice of all is superstition, which consists in thinking of nature as not subject to rules which the understanding through its own essential law lays down as the basis of nature. Liberation from superstition is called

enlightenment; for although liberation from prejudices generally may also be called enlightenment, still superstition deserves to be called a preeminent prejudice, since the blindness that superstition creates in a person, which indeed it even seems to demand as an obligation, reveals especially well the person's need to be guided by others, and hence his state of a passive reason."

**(5) *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798), pt. 1, §45**

Discusses "Unmündigkeit" (the inability to use one's own understanding in civil society), which is either "Minderjährigkeit" (a problem of youth) or "bürgerliche Unmündigkeit" (a problem of state censorship).

**(6) *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798) [Ak. 7: 1-116]. Pt. 2: "An Old Question Raised Again: Is the Human Race Constantly Progressing?"**

"Enlightenment of the people [*Volksaufklärung*] is the public instruction of the people in its duties and rights vis-a-vis the state to which they belong. Since this concerns only natural rights and rights which can be derived from ordinary common sense, their obvious exponents and interpreters among the people will not be officials appointed by the state, but free teachers of right, i.e., the philosophers. The latter, on account of the very freedom which they allow themselves, are a stumbling-block to the state, whose only wish is to rule; they are accordingly given the appellation of 'enlighteners', and decried as a menace to the state. And yet they do not address themselves in familiar tones to the people (who themselves take little or no notice of them and their writings, but in respectful tones to the state, which is thereby implored to take the rightful needs of the people to hear. And if a whole people wishes to present its grievance, the only way in which this can be done is by publicity. A ban on publicity will therefore hinder a nation's progress, even with regard to the least of its claims, the claim for natural rights." [Ak. 7: 89]

**(7) *Jäsche Logic* (1800) [Ak. 9: 57; Young, 563-64].**

"An external mark or an external touchstone of truth is the comparison of our own judgments with those of others, because the subjective will not be present in all others in the same way, so that illusion can thereby be cleared up....

The common human understanding (*sensus communis*) is also in itself a touchstone for discovering the mistakes of the artificial use of the understanding. This is what it means to orient oneself in thought or in the speculative use of reason by means of the common understanding, when one uses the common understanding as a test for passing judgment on the correctness of the speculative use.

Universal rules and conditions for avoiding error in general are: (1) to think for oneself, (2) to think oneself in the position of someone else, and (3) always to think in agreement with oneself. The maxim of thinking for oneself can be called the enlightened way of thinking [*Denkungsart*]; the maxim of putting oneself in the viewpoint of others in thought, the extended way of thinking; and the maxim of always thinking in agreement with oneself, the consistent way of thinking."

**(8) *On Education* (1803) [Ak. 9: 450]**

"Man can be either merely trained, taught, mechanically instructed, or really enlightened. Dogs and horses are trained and human beings can be trained also. [...] It is not enough that children be trained; the most important thing is that they learn to think."

**(9) *Reflexionen zur Anthropologie* [Ak. 15: 55-654] #1423 [Ak. 15: 620-21]**

"The worst transition is from the natural condition to the civil, from the raw to the refinement of taste and art, from ignorance to the enlightened of science, in short, from immaturity to maturity. The world is still young. Scarcely a half has been discovered. Man will yet attain his vocation, in education, religion, lifestyle, and civil constitution, as well as civil rights [*Völkerrechts*]."