



The Enlightenment



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Enlightenment on the Enlightenment Era

From about 400 to 1500 CE, the Roman Catholic Church played a significant role in the lives of most European citizens. Catholic parishioners were told, if they observed the sacraments which included christening, confirmation, attending mass and observing the Eucharist, participated in a religious marriage ceremony and having last rites performed by a priest, they would be guaranteed a place in heaven. Non-Catholics, they preached, would roast in hell. As the Church expanded into most of Europe, the papacy not only wielded ecclesiastical power, but political power as well.

But in the 1300s changes began to occur, blossoming in northern Europe in 1517 with the advent of Martin Luther's Protestant Reformation. There were also John Calvin's activities in Switzerland, the founding of the Anglican Church in England by King Henry VIII, and the founding of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland by John Knox. These events helped to allow the advancement of science, the development of democracy and the final flowering of the Renaissance which began in Italy in the 1400s. The Renaissance Period witnessed significant developments in the arts, including the rediscovery of the classics of Greece and Rome and increasing manifestations of sculpture, painting and literature, culminating in England with Shakespeare and his contemporaries. The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in 1439, assisted greatly in the dissemination of these new occurrences. Overlapping these activities was the onset of what became known as the Enlightenment, beginning around 1650.

By this time scholars were well aware of the works of Copernicus and Galileo and their pronouncements that our solar system was heliocentric, not geocentric. Isaac Newton was soon to publish his laws of gravity and motion, and the political theories of John Locke would eventually influence the founding fathers of the United States. Of particular interest to humanists is the Scottish philosopher David Hume, one of the first well-known persons after Spinoza to declare himself an atheist. A brief account of Hume's life by Adriaan Mak begins on page 3.

During the Enlightenment, it was predicted that with increasing knowledge of science, increasing democratic rule and realizations that religious beliefs were spurious, wars would cease, religions would fade away, and prosperity would prevail. As we know now, this did not happen.

In Part I of their recent book, *The Shape of the New: Four big ideas and how they made the modern world*, authors Scott L. Montgomery and Daniel Chirot describe how four Enlightenment revolutionary ideas about freedom, equality, evolution and democracy have shaped today's world. In Part II, they describe how Fascism, and Christian and Islamic fundamentalism, have perversely hindered the attainment of the peaceful secular societies envisioned by the philosophers, scientists and economists of the Enlightenment. A review of this book begins on page 4.

President's Remarks

This issue of the Enlightenment marks the end of another year and the beginning of a new one. In early December, more than 60 members and friends of HALA joined together for a time of fellowship and good cheer at our annual winter solstice party at the 427 Wing. This year we enjoyed a special musical treat of not just one but two live bands. HALA member Ron Loxton came with several of his musician friends to entertain us and to lead us in singing a number of rousing holiday favorites such as "Let it Snow" and "Walking in a Winter Wonderland." In addition, we were regaled by the harmonious singing and ukulele music of the Ukulettes. Special thanks to all those who helped to make the party such a success, particularly Wendy Kennedy and Carolyn Rowland. Looking back, 2015 has been another very good year for HALA. We had an excellent series of well-attended monthly meetings with a variety of very interesting speakers. We were happy to see many new faces at our meetings, including a number of younger people who are showing interest and enthusiasm for humanism. Our Facebook page and website are continuing to draw many new visitors. We now have a PayPal link on our website that makes it possible for people to renew their membership, or join up for the first time, via a secure payment system. We plan to extend this in the near future to enable on-line charitable donations as well. In July, we had another strong showing at the London Pride parade, this time sporting our colourful HALA t-shirts, thanks to Brad Banks and Brian Prachar. Recently we initiated the HALA Care team, led by Peter Evans and composed of several volunteers who will be available to send cards and messages of support to members who may be going through times of illness or difficulty. This is a welcome initiative that will help to build a greater sense of community among our members. Speaking of community, we are also very pleased that Sherry Keddie has joined us this year and is starting up a Sunday Assembly here in London. The first meeting, which was held in December, was attended by a number of HALA members and was a great success, with enthusiastic singing, poetry, and an inspiring speaker. We wish her and her team continued success in the future. And to all our members, I want to extend my best wishes for 2016, as we look forward to another good year. ~ Rod Martin

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David Hume (1711 - 1776) "The Virtuous Infidel"

A Trailbreaker for Modern Humanism

By Adriaan Mak

David Hume, living in what we now call "The Age of the Enlightenment," took a skeptical approach to a range of philosophical topics. Obviously aware of the progress that natural philosophers such as Roger Bacon, Galileo, and Newton had made when dealing with the physical universe, his first work, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1740), asks whether methods of observation and experimentation would work in other areas of study; hence the subtitle: *Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects*.

As is the case with the word *humanist*, the word *scientist* also did not enter the English language until 1840 in the 19th Century when the latter word was coined by William Whewell, a polymath whose experiments involved physics, geology, astronomy, and mechanics.

Again, we must remember that, like Spinoza in a Calvinist society a century before him, Hume in Presbyterian Scotland needed to exercise caution. The principal of Edinburgh University, Hume's alma mater, had been accused of heterodoxy in 1737, for merely failing to emphasize the Doctrine of Original Sin, the belief that all humans are doomed to everlasting fire because the first humans, Adam and Eve, tasted the fruit of the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden.

One needs therefore little imagination to understand what happened in 1744 when Hume applied for the vacant post of Professor of Ethics at the same university. A joint session of the Presbyterian clergy of Edinburgh advised against Hume's candidacy on the grounds that he was a heretic, sceptic, and atheist. Hume lost the chance, although later he got the post of librarian in 1754. Still, the Presbyterians tried to get rid of Hume. First, he was accused of ordering books that were deemed by some to be unworthy of a place in a university library. Attempts to have him dismissed followed later in 1756 by an attempt to have him excommunicated. Both moves by the Edinburgh clergy were unsuccessful.

Hume's life and writings show no evidence that he relied on a belief in anything supernatural. He indicated that all beliefs based on supposedly miraculous events should be rejected. He also subjected the standard proofs for the existence of a supernatural entity to his "experimental method of reasoning," causing him to reject the God hypothesis. Such beliefs, he thought, were grounded more in human psychology than rational argument or direct divine revelation.

What may disappoint present-day leftist Humanists is Hume's disagreement with one of the major arguments by *Enlightenment* thinkers, among whom are Thomas Hobbes (1588 –1679), Hugo de Groot [Grotius] (1583 –1645) and Hume's contemporary, Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712 - 1778), who espoused political theories involving *social contracts*, which in the twentieth century led to Charters of Rights and Freedoms in many democracies.

On the other hand, Hume would likewise displease present-day conservatives with his anti-mercantilist and anti-capitalist views. He argued that governments should not specifically protect generators of wealth, among whom were colonialists, i.e., the ones who made England an empire.

On his deathbed, when questioned about the immortality of the soul, Hume affirmed that he had lost his religious beliefs after reading John Locke (1632 - 1704), most likely his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Various friends and busybodies tried to have Hume recant his non-theistic stance. His friend James Boswell visited him twice and asked him, "Don't you at least accept the possibility of an after-life?" Hume rejected that idea. Adam Smith understood and reported in a letter the following words by Hume: ". . . I am dying as fast as my enemies, if I have any, could wish, and as easily and cheerfully as my best friends could desire."

Source: *The Life of David Hume* by E.C. Mossner (1980 edition) Re "The Virtuous Infidel" and Adam Smith's remark: see pp 587-8. Hume's major writings: *A Treatise of Human Nature* ; *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*; *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*

Book Review – by Don Hatch

The Shape Of The New: Four Big Ideas and How They Made the Modern World

By Scott L. Montgomery and Daniel Chirot.

Part I - Freedom, equality, evolution and modern democracy are the four Enlightenment concepts that Montgomery and Chirot have chosen as the themes in Part I of *The Shape of the New*. The five men they have selected to represent these four Enlightenment ideas are Adam Smith on freedom, Karl Marx on equality, Charles Darwin on evolution and Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton on modern democracy.

In the introduction to the book they state: "The Enlightenment was a critical period for the birth of modernity, an era of deep separation from all that had gone before. Earlier upheavals of the social order sought their legitimacy in theology, law, and tradition, but from the 1700s onward, such changes were powered by ideas that were secular and that looked to found a society and its institutions on concepts anchored in evidence-based reason-led 'scientific' understanding of man and the universe." We begin our review of these Enlightenment concepts by summarizing the work of Scottish pioneer economist and moral philosopher Adam Smith.

Adam Smith (1723-1790) - Adam Smith was a graduate of the University of Glasgow and Balliol College, Oxford. He became a professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow, where he published *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* in 1759. Later, in 1776, he published *An Inquiry into The Nature And Causes Of The Wealth Of Nations*, the first modern work of economics from which "came the idea that individuals should have the freedom to make all essential decisions affecting their lives, and if they were allowed to do so, the resulting society would be the most efficient, prosperous and free."

In *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith argues against the "absurdities of mercantilism" that was prevalent in Europe during his time. He writes, "nothing has been more fatal to the repose of Europe than the impertinent jealousy of merchants and manufacturer due to their monopolizing spirit. Monopolies are economic tyranny." He argued that the wealth of a nation should not be measured by the amount of gold in its treasury, but by the extent of its production and sales of goods and services. He championed

free trade and the absence of tariffs as a means of keeping prices low and sharing wealth amongst all citizens, not just royalty, nobility, merchants, and manufacturers. Being able to trade freely with other nations forms a basic principle of prosperity, and assists in creating a society without great inequality of wealth.

Phrases like “free enterprise,” “laissez-faire,” and “capitalism,” are often associated with Adam Smith, but these terms do not appear anywhere in *The Wealth of Nations*. Today certain conservative economists maintain that the “invisible hand” of fair competition will insure that prices are kept low and that wealth will be equally shared as long as there is minimum interference from governments. But as we now know, particularly in the United States, deregulation has caused the middle class to shrink as the few at the top become excessively rich. Those at the top have adopted only half of Adam Smith’s teachings, promoting a free enterprise system with an “invisible hand” out of control. They have ignored the fact that Smith was not only the founder of modern economics, but also a moral philosopher who had genuine concern for all citizens, and knew that societies without a free and prosperous middle class cannot endure indefinitely. Adam Smith would be pleased to know about the prosperity that prevailed in the western world from the end of WW II until about 1980, but would be most disappointed with what has happened to the middle class since then.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) - Karl Marx was born in Trier Prussia and studied at the universities of Bonn and Berlin. He moved to Paris in 1843 where he met Friedrich Engels who became a lifelong friend and collaborator. He moved to England in 1849, one year after he wrote *The Communist Manifesto*. In the *Manifesto* he states:

“In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonism, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.... Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist Revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!”

Marx was excessively concerned with the inequality he observed around him, and was convinced that the existing capitalist system of his day should be replaced with something better. That something better was Marxist communism, but it could only be achieved by revolution. And the revolution would succeed because the sheer numbers of the proletariat would overwhelm the bourgeois. Private property would disappear, and with it inequality. Religions, “the opiate of the people,” would also vanish and the future would be a golden idyllic age with an unheard-of level of prosperity.

Marx had hoped that the revolution would occur in Germany, but instead it happened in Russia in 1917. Vladimir Lenin was well versed in the theories of Marx and led a successful revolution against Tsar Nicholas II. As is well known, Joseph Stalin succeeded Lenin and ruled the USSR with an iron fist, purging his enemies in the process. Stalin’s successors attempted to make a success of their communist system, but failed in the end as the USSR fell apart in 1989.

Mao Zedong in China was a well-read intellectual and, like Lenin, well acquainted with the works of Marx. Before and after WW II, he transformed the Chinese peasantry into a revolutionary class and drove Chiang Kai-Shek and his Nationalist Party out of China in 1949. China has been communist since

then, but is now becoming a substantially capitalist country, with politics controlled by an autocratic Communist Party.

Other countries in Asia, Africa and South America adopted communism, but it now exists principally in North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba, although modifications are occurring in the latter two countries. Communism has not proved to be a viable vehicle for creating a prosperous society of optimum equality as Marx had hoped. Authors Montgomery and Chirot describe the reality of Communism as “the tragic consequence of a brilliant theory”.

Charles Darwin. (1809-1882) - Charles Darwin was born in Shrewsbury, England, the son of wealthy society doctor and financier Robert Darwin and Susannah Darwin (née Wedgewood). Charles attended the University of Edinburgh Medical School, but medicine did not appeal to him and he switched to Christ College Cambridge where he obtained a BA. In 1831 he began his five year voyage on *HMS Beagle* as a naturalist engaged to study the geology, flora and fauna of the countries visited by the Beagle, collecting many specimens along the way. On the geologically new Galapagos Islands, he observed how species differed not only from the mainland, but also from island to island. Upon returning to England, he began the huge task of recording his findings and formulating and publishing his famous book, *On the Origin of Species* in 1859.

Before Darwin, it was believed that nature revealed the hand of an active loving God who had made creation a realm of infinite beauty and order for the pleasure and instruction of humankind. After Darwin, at least in most scientific circles, God was no longer the divine watchmaker. Species were ever-changing, dynamic entities, and humans merely one among them. Evolution through natural selection set out to replace the Biblical stories of creation recorded in Genesis.

Charles Darwin was a modest man and did not actively or publicly promote his theories to any great extent, partly because he did not want to offend his Unitarian relatives, the Wedgewoods. A major promoter of Darwinian evolution through natural selection was the English biologist Thomas Huxley, who was known as “Darwin’s Bulldog.” Huxley and others hoped that, because Darwin’s findings were so logical and convincing, they would be readily accepted, not only in scientific circles, but also amongst the majority of the laity.

But Darwin’s theory of evolution did not immediately find wide-spread acceptance, especially in religious circles. The Catholics, Anglicans, and evangelicals in particular, rejected any alternative to creationism. And even today, although evolution is freely taught in science classes in the schools of most western countries, there are organized movements in the United States lobbying to have creationism taught in science classes along with evolution, in order that students may have a choice on which to believe.

By now, most liberal Christians have rejected creationism and consider the Genesis stories to be myths. They also consider the Bible to be a human creation. As a result, in most western countries, mainline religions are in decline and secularism is on the increase. But in some areas, evangelical/fundamentalism is not in decline, whether it be Christian or Islamic. This phenomenon is currently causing great concern and is dealt with later in this discourse.

Today, Charles Darwin is becoming recognized as one of the greatest scientists of the modern era, ranking alongside Newton and Einstein. And very recently, a British academic publishing group has named *On the Origin of Species* the academic book that changed the world the most. It is so disappointing that there are still so many for whom evolution has not yet replaced creationism in their beliefs.

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) and Alexander Hamilton (1755-1804) - Chapter 4 is entitled, *Making Democracy, The Jefferson-Hamilton Debates*. The authors affirm that “modern democracy first came into being through the efforts of the founders of the United States, most of all those we have chosen to discuss, Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton.”

It was these two brilliant, but also flawed men, more than any others, whose fierce debates set the patterns for how to imagine, implement and institutionalize this new political system that, in various shapes, would come to influence much of the world.

Among the 56 signers to the U.S. *Declaration of Independence*, there were a few who stood out above the others. These include Thomas Jefferson, principal author of the *Declaration*, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Benjamin Harrison, and John Hancock. Other prominent influential individuals at the time were Thomas Paine, George Washington, Alexander Hamilton and James Madison. So why did the authors of the book select only Jefferson and Hamilton from this illustrious group? It was because these intellectual men, who were not friendly to each other, represented two different visions of America. Hamilton was a federalist, who desired strong federal authority, a large military, a federally driven industrial economy, and an active foreign policy. Jefferson wanted a weak centre, local militias, a nation of yeoman farmers, and “entangling alliances with none.”

Hamilton was the founder of the Federalist Party, which eventually became the Republican Party. Jefferson’s legacy was the eventual Democratic Party. Throughout the ensuing years, the two opposing parties came to realize that democracy works best when disagreements are settled through compromise. Through many ups and downs including the civil war, resulting in the abolition of slavery, booms and depressions, and two world wars, the world’s first “instant democracy” prospered and became the most successful nation on earth. After WW II, with Roosevelt’s New Deal in place, a strong economy and a prosperous middle class emerged. At America’s 200 year Anniversary in 1976, the future looked very bright indeed.

But things changed as the New Deal began to be dismantled by the conservatives, after the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. Continuing deregulation allowed Wall Street financiers and big business, through lobbying, to grasp more control of government, which helped precipitate the 2008 financial crisis. And now, the two political parties are unable or unwilling to work together and compromise, in order to find practical solutions to the problems in the current environment where inequality is increasing as the rich get richer and the middle class shrinks. The powers in control thought that Adam Smith’s “invisible hand” would keep things in balance, but they ignored Smith’s warning that economies without equality among the citizens cannot sustain themselves. The Founding Fathers must be turning over in their graves, now that they see what greed has wrought.

Part II - Part II of *The Shape of the New* is entitled *Secular and Religious Reactions against the Enlightenment*. As has been indicated, it was the dream and hope of Enlightenment scholars and others that wars would cease, religions would decline, and advances in science and technology would eliminate a great deal of drudgery, thus allowing citizens to have more leisure time in an environment of peace and prosperity. Actually, all of these things did happen for a period from 1945 to 1980 in a few countries in Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. And advances in science and technology have not only occurred, but have exceeded all expectations. Even as recently as 25 years ago, who would have predicted personal computers and smart phones? But wars have not ceased and fundamentalist religious beliefs are causing serious problems. The subjects considered in the final chapters of the book are Fascism, Christian fundamentalism, and Islamic fundamentalism.

Great things were happening in the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1901, Marconi received a wireless signal on Signal Hill in St. John's, Newfoundland, from across the Atlantic. In 1903 the Wright brothers made the first ever heavier-than-air manned and powered flight. In 1905, Einstein published four important papers that revolutionized science. By 1910, automobiles were becoming practical and homes were being wired electrically. And there was peace in the Western world.

But things changed in 1914 with the onset of WW I. The causes of the war are complex, but involved nationalism, militarism, colonialism, and an incompetent German Kaiser among other things. The war ended with the Treaty of Versailles, which trimmed the borders of Germany and saddled Germany with billions in reparation payments (that later became one of the causes of WW II). A heady prosperity emerged in the 1920s, but ended in 1929 with the start of the Great Depression. During the depression, fascism began in earnest in Italy under Mussolini and also grew in Germany under Hitler. Coincident with the rise of fascism was an increase in anti-Semitism, culminating in the holocaust. WW II was the most bloody and destructive in history as the fruits of science and technology were put to use by the forces on both sides of the conflict. The war ended in 1945 as we entered the atomic age. Ironically, Einstein's 1905 equation, $E=mc^2$ was the pre-cursor of the two atomic bombs dropped on Japan.

As mentioned above, the 35 year period after WW II was one of great progress in many countries of the Western world and might accurately be described as a period of *Enlightenment*. Probably nowhere was this Enlightenment atmosphere better exemplified than by Canada's 100th birthday in 1967, culminating in the magnificent Expo 67 in Montreal. During this era, a sizable prosperous middle class emerged with real income levels rising until leveling out after 1980. Also after WW II, there was a mild surge in attendance at mainline churches that reached its zenith around 1960. But from then onward, mainline church attendance declined in many Western countries as they became more secular, particularly in Europe, where church attendance in some countries is now less than 5% of the population.

But the United States is an exception. In that country, religiosity has not seen a significant decline as Christian fundamentalism is on the increase and has regrettably infiltrated into governments. It is virtually certain that George Bush would not have been elected if not for the religious right vote. And there are members in Congress who fervently believe there is no need to worry about global warming because the tragic events in the middle-east herald the imminent end of the world and the second coming of Christ. Also disturbing is the reluctance of certain fundamentalists to accept Darwinian evolution as scientific fact and insist creationism should be taught in science classes in schools as an alternative to evolution.

Now, although it is unsettling that the fundamentalist movement in the United States is slowing the transition to a more secular society, Christian fundamentalists no longer advocate burning at the stake for perceived heresy, nor do they go around preaching *jihad* and beheading infidels, as is happening with Islamic fundamentalist terrorists today. Just as Christianity went through a reformation, reform is badly needed in Islam, but sadly no one knows how to bring it about.

For a few hundred years before the European Renaissance, the Arab Muslim nations were ahead of the West in the disciplines of mathematics, science, astronomy, medicine and architecture. And Arab scholars performed the fortuitous task of translating the classic writings of Greece and Rome. This was fortuitous because much of this so-called pagan literature was burned in the famous Alexandria libraries by Christians. But as Europe advanced during the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Enlightenment, Islamic learning stagnated and ceased to innovate or absorb much outside learning. And still today, Islam lags behind, as it perpetuates a culture that is reluctant to modernize and accept values that are cherished in the west, such as equal rights for women.

Today there are two separate problems. One is the hatred between Sunni and Shia Muslims. The West cannot solve this problem; the Muslims must do it themselves. The other problem is the hatred of the West by the Islamic terrorists who practice *jihad*. To no small extent, the West must bear much of the responsibility for this hatred. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Britain and France established artificial national boundaries without concern for ethnicity and religion, thus causing unrest and instability. Also western oil companies exploited the vast oil resources of the region, and in some quarters the West is hated for supporting Israel.

So how can this infernal mess caused by Islamic fundamentalist *jihadists* be resolved? No one knows for certain, but this situation is of great concern to Western countries at the moment, threatening the stability of peaceful societies living freely according to Enlightenment values.

If my surmising that the dreams and hopes of the Enlightenment scholars and others manifested themselves for a time after WW II in a few so-called Western countries, then it is really a no-brainer to suggest what we should strive for. Simply put, it comes down to economics. Societies that are free and prosperous with a minimum of religiosity are those with a large, nearly fully-employed middle class, with social safety nets and with enough government regulations to preserve income equality and prevent powerful influences from taking over. And would you believe that a society that came close to these ideals existed 2400 years ago?

The Golden Age of Classical Athens

The Rise and Fall of Classical Greece is a recent book penned by Political Science and Classics Professor Josiah Ober, in which he describes the Golden Age that existed in Athens in the 4th and 5th centuries BCE, while explaining the factors that allowed this democracy to occur. This is a well-researched, scholarly tome in which 70 of the 400 pages are devoted to notes and bibliography. Classical Greece is well renowned for the beginning and advancement of philosophy, its architecture, its literature, its dramas, its sculpture and the birthplace of democracy. In this book, Ober deals mainly with the latter.

Grecian democracy came about as a result of a few very competent people coming along at just the right time. The first of these men was Solon (638-558 BCE). In 594 BCE, Solon was chosen as archon of Athens and endowed with special lawmaking authority in order to establish some much needed cohesion. His first move was a one-time cancellation of debts. He then created a foundation for order, proclaiming three legal reforms: (1) Written law defining bright-line violations; (2) Institutionalization of the citizenry as a legal body with authority; (3) Capacity to act jointly in response to violations, and incentives for individuals to initiate legal process against violators. These reforms set Athens on a path toward eventual democracy and prosperity. The second prominent person was Cleisthenes (570-508 BCE). He invented democratic federalism, which in the end proved to be more successful than he had hoped. The third outstanding individual was the statesman, orator and general Pericles (495-429 BCE). As a leader, under his direction Athens became a new kind of superpolis. During the period between the end of the Persian wars and the beginning of the Peloponnesian war, Athens was at its zenith, sometimes described as a high-culture Golden Age. This was the era of the dramas of Sophocles and Euripides, the architecture of Ictinus, the sculpture of Pheidias, the moral philosophy of Socrates, and the medicine of Hippocrates.

So what was it that led to this one of a kind Golden Age? The seeds were sown by Solon and Cleisthenes, whose wisdom and cleverness precipitated an eventual participatory democratic society that functioned well and did not allow the creation of an oligarchy. An important factor was the free trade that existed between the numerous Greek city-states without tariffs. This helped keep the cost of commodities at a minimum, helping to bring about a non-elite, prosperous middle class. Trade was facilitated by a well administered coinage system. The tax system was graduated so that the elite paid at a higher rate than the middle class. And an interesting observation is that morality was in the domain of the philosophers, not the priests. (What a pity that morality was usurped by the Christian church). Fortunately Greek democracy did not end with the Peloponnesian war. It continued on until about 340 BCE. This was the era of the important philosophers Plato and Aristotle, who both founded academies of learning in Athens and authored many important works that we still study today.

It must be noted that Greek democracy had its shortcomings. Only adult male Athenians could vote in the assembly. Women, resident aliens, and slaves were not allowed to vote. But power and authority clearly lay with all those who could vote, not just an elite aristocracy. Yes, here was a functioning democracy made from scratch, so to speak. Although democracy was slowly evolving in England, a democracy from scratch did not happen again until the founding of the United States over 2000 years after the Athenian democracy. (It is worth noting that slavery was present in both cases).

So what can we learn from the Greeks? I think they have given us a lesson in economics 2000 years before Adam Smith. A prosperous, free democratic society must have free trade and a prominent gainfully-employed middle class, without a ruling elite or the influence of special interests. Religions should be in the background, with morality in the hands of philosophers, parents, and teachers.

Why has it taken so long for people to learn these simple facts? In the final words of the refrain in Pete Seeger's song, *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?* I ask:

*Oh, when will they ever learn?
Oh, when will they ever learn?*

Current Humanist News

HALA obtained charitable status with the Canada Revenue Agency under the category of Education. Our Purpose, as stated in our Constitution, is “to educate and increase the public’s understanding of the principles of secular worldviews, including humanism.” As part of our education remit, we periodically publish *The Enlightenment* which is a mini-journal containing articles of a philosophical or academic nature with a connection to humanism. It is not a newsletter listing current humanist news or events.

It has been suggested that for those wanting to view the latest news about humanist happenings recorded in various media, *The Enlightenment* should contain a link to sites showing these events. Shawn Conroy of Central Ontario Humanists, based in Barrie, prepares a weekly summary of current humanist happenings, and they can be observed by clicking on the link shown below. This link will be included in future *Enlightenments*.

<https://storify.com/ShawnHumanist>