3) In what ways was the expansion of western Europe and its culture after 1500 a positive thing for the Earth and its peoples around the world? In what ways was this expansion negative? Do you think the positive outweighs the negative?

While European expansion created many horrors, like the slave trade, and sometimes disrupted social and economic arrangements around the world, it also helped spread new products and knowledge to and from other cultures around the world. **The expansion of western Europe and its culture after 1500 was a positive thing because it helped to establish things like global trade and communication and spread great scientific knowledge. It was also a negative thing because it involved exploitation of less developed regions of the world and sometimes brought great economic and social disruption. Overall, the positive effects of Europe’s expansion do outweigh the negative consequences because of the progress that it brought to our world.**

The expansion of western Europe was a good thing because it helped establish global trade and communication. While self-interest has motivated their ambitions to explore the rest of the world, their exchanges with the rest of the world benefited more than just themselves. For example, the Spanish could not find spice-growing regions in their expeditions to the Philippines, but in Manila they found a great trading port, which benefited the natives there. In a source written by Antonio de Morga, he writes that from the trade that goes on in Manila “they pay into the royal treasury of Manila” (The Human Record, Ch. 4, pg. 125). This is when you consider the ten percent duties for entrance and two percent duties on exports. Europe was also undergoing its own scientific revolution, which brought about great knowledge that it could spread to the world once it started becoming more interconnected. For example, even though Nicholas Copernicus was the one who theorized that the Earth revolved around the sun, Galileo Galilei defended and supported his theory publicly. He argues that as a natural consequence of people believing that the Bible cannot be wrong it follows naturally that anyone “who maintains that the sun is inherently motionless and the earth movable” (The Human Record, Ch. 1, pg. 38) is erroneous. It is discoveries like these that made Europe’s expansion a good thing.

The expansion of western Europe was also a bad thing because it did sometimes affect other regions negatively. For example, European involvement in the slave trade brought great tragedy to the people of Africa. In one instance, King Afonso (King of Kongo) once writes a letter to the King of Portugal complaining about the slave trade and how it affects his people. In one of his letters, he writes that "the mentioned merchants are taking every day our natives, sons of the land and the sons of our noblemen and vassals and our relatives'' (The Human Record, Ch. 3, pg. 77). For the subjects of his kingdom, this trade is hard on them because it separates families, friends, and neighbors without just cause. The trade is even more difficult on Africans when you consider how difficult their conditions were in ships and how their work was when they arrived at their eventual destinations. Another example of a negative impact that the expansion of Europe may have had could be the Opium trade with China. In a letter written by Lin Zexu, he complains that the foreigners “are so obsessed with material gain that they have no concern for the harm they cause” (The Human Record, Ch. 10, pg. 306). He asks how it is possible that they could return social and economic disruption in exchange for profiting off the Chinese people. Lin also brings up the fact that they prohibit opium within their own borders, thus implying that the British who sell this stuff knew of the harmful effects of opium. Other arguments follow such as the fact that China has never sold harmful products to foreign countries and that they could end the trade with no loss if the situation entails it but chose not to in good faith. Based on these examples, it is evident that not everyone got to win from Europe’s expansion.

Sometimes, European expansion could have a rather mixed impact on other parts of the world, where both positive and negative things happened. For example, when you look at the Islamic world during the Mughal Empire, at first, the rulers saw Europeans “less as enemies than as shipmasters whose support could be procured as needed in return for trading privileges” (Earth and Its Peoples, Ch. 20-3a). The reason for this was because they lacked a regular navy and they realized they could reach a mutually beneficial relationship with the Europeans. However, when independent kingdoms formed later on in this empire, the lack of central power favored eventual intrusion by Europeans. In fact, in 1741, Joseph François Dupleix began a phase of European involvement in India, much to its dismay. Joseph François Dupleix then captured the English trading center of Madras and “used his small contingent of European and European-trained Indian troops to become a power broker in southern India” (Earth and Its Peoples, Ch. 20-3c). When Dupleix had left, his departure only left a weakened India vulnerable to the British. The British exploits involved things like hard bargaining and hard trading just to establish coastal trading ports.

To summarize, the expansion of western Europe was a grand thing because it helped bring prosperity not just to Europe, but to other parts of the world as well. Its expansion helped to revolutionize economies and societies, and indirectly brought awareness to the need for human rights, especially during the slave trade. Its expansion was also negative in that it gave way to things like social disruption and the economic exploitation of other regions. Regardless of the negative effects it had, it was a good thing overall because it helped spread important knowledge and discoveries like heliocentrism, gravity, electricity, and so on. It also helped to connect the world, distribute new and foreign products, and sometimes fostered mutually beneficial cooperation between groups.