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**Kant: “What is Enlightenment?”**

Immanuel Kant was a German philosopher who lived in 18th century when there was an intellectual movement in Europe. During this period of time, majority of the people lived under absolute monarchy where people didn't have any voice in government. Kant was against this democracy because he believed that these rules and regulations threatened individuals’ freedom. According to Kant, we cannot enlighten public quickly; rather, enlightenment will come slowly by using freedom of thoughts.

In the essay, “What is Enlightenment?” Immanuel Kant defines enlightenment as “man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage”. Tutelage means to be taught, mentored, or tutored. In other words, Kant says that tutelage is ones lack of courage to make decisions for himself without having directions from others. “Have courage to use your own reason!” is the motto of enlightenment, according to Kant’s essay. This simply means to stop letting your church, parents, friends, kings, or physicians make decisions for you.

Kant also says that it is cowardly to remain in tutelage, but it may be hard to overcome it because we are used to having guardians. He describes these guardians as people who tell us what to think and decide what is right or good for us with the intention of protecting us. This act of protection binds to tutelage. However, only those who have the courage to make an attempt to make decisions on their own can be free from tutelage.

So what causes people to remain under tutelage? Kant points out threat and laziness to be the main causes of people dwelling under tutelage. He says, “the guardians then show them the dangers which threaten if they try to go alone.” This frightens people to make decisions on their own and fashions them to be dependent on others. Kant uses a metaphor of falling in his essay, “by falling a few times they would finally learn to walk alone”, to explain that though one may fall a few times, one will eventually learn to walk on their own, in other words, learn to think on their own. Laziness is another cause for people to stay under tutelage. Kant, in his essay says, “If I have a book which understands for me, a pastor who has conscience for me, a physician who decides my diet, and so forth, I need not trouble myself. I need not think, if I can only pay- others will easily undertake and irksome work for me.” In other words, if you can get others to take care of your problems and do the thinking for you, why bother to think it yourself? Kant compares man with cattle to support his point, dumb and afraid without a guardian.

So how can one attain enlightenment? Kant states that, “indeed, if only freedom is granted enlightenment is almost sure to follow”. So freedom is the key to attaining enlightenment. Kant places a heavy emphasis on freedom being public. He says, “the public use of one’s reason must always be free, and it alone can bring about enlightenment among men”. However, Kant is aware that there are restrictions on freedom everywhere. He points out that no matter what title one may hold; an officer, pastor, or king, all require that they do not argue and must obey. He also quotes Fredrick as saying “argue as much as you will and about what you will, but obey”. Here, at least freedom of speech is offered.

In his essay, Kant describes freedom by introducing the freedom of speech and the freedom of thought which gives power to the people. In other words, people should not be afraid to speak their minds and think for themselves. There are benefits and harms to Kant’s idea of freedom. Giving freedom of speech and thought to the common people would have a large impact on the society. People being able to argue on ruling power would have impact on the government. With Kant’s idea, people would be able to think for themselves on their own. However, the disadvantage of this idea would be having a difficult time governing a country with everyone thinking for themselves. Looking at the bright side though, many of his ideas are common to the Western world today because the benefits overweigh the harm as critical thinking is encouraged amongst people.