
Comparison Enlightenment And Romanticism

Enlightenment and Romanticism are known as two of the biggest movements in the history of western civilization. From these two, many political, economic, social, industrial and cultural movements developed. Many of these developments are still continued in today's time. Enlightenment is known as the "Age of reason" while Romanticism was focused on the hearts and minds of society. The two movements may differ in many ways, but they also have similar concepts because of the slight way Romanticism built on the ideologies of Enlightenment. Regardless of differences and similarities between the two, it is important to note that many of the general ideas of both still live on in today's society. Romanticism continued the ideas of individualism and religious freedom, but changed the views from Enlightenment on science with nature and religion as a whole.

While the two movements may seem extremely different from one another, there are still many intellectual continuities that can be found. One main way that Romanticism built off it's previous movement was the idea surrounding individual experience. The term individual experience was focused on the overall freedom of the individual. For example, Enlightenment states, "The idea that individuals should be free from coercion in their personal lives" (Britannica School). Accompanying this, Romanticism believed, "Doing something that you want to do instead of what society says" (Britannica School). Through these examples, it is easy to notice that both ideologies believed individuals should be free to make their own decisions based on their own interests. Both agreed that each individual has a set of rights that the government and society should not be able to control or take away.

When it came to religious freedom aspects, both movements wanted individuals to be able to believe in whatever they believed in. They did not want anyone to be coerced into believing that one God or church was the correct one. While the basic idea around religion and Church was different, the main goal in both periods was the right to power of their own person even in religious aspects. In the late eighteenth century (Enlightenment) the French created the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, in which rule ten declares, "No one may be disturbed because of his opinions, even religious, provided that their public demonstration does not disturb the public order established by law" (Spielvogel, 570). So, as seen from this statement, it is clear to see that even during the Enlightenment the main goal was to allow the people their freedom of religion. This is the area in which Romanticism continued the idea because the concept of freedom of religion was carried into the nineteenth century.

Clearly some ideas in Romanticism vaguely followed the ideas of Enlightenment, but in reality the two periods were quite different from each other. The most noticeable difference was the opposing views of science. The philosophers of the Enlightenment began to replace superstition with scientific facts while expanding human knowledge. They believed that the universe worked more as a machine without the hand of God. An example of this is seen through the statement, "Empiricism was thus central to the Enlightenment's desire to establish knowledge on firm foundations rather than blindly following authority, convention, tradition and prejudice" (Open learn). Basically what this means is that instead of believing what is unknown, the philosophers of the Enlightenment believed knowledge should be based on what can be measured or seen. So in a sense, the idea that God ran the world, Enlightenment began to prove that the world

operated more as a machine because of scientific theories and findings during this time. Romantics, on the other hand believed the opposite of this. Their main belief was centered around imagination and creation. They thought that the Enlightenment notion that the universe was knowable and controllable was naive. For example, Mary Shelly's gothic novel *Frankenstein* depicts these thoughts by having the scientific creation destroy everything around it. Through this novel, Shelly was attempting to show that there is more to life than just straight scientific facts, and that without imagination the world would fall. The two periods contradicting views on science and life came into play with views on things such as nature and art as well.

Well known Romantic Wordsworth believed that science had reduced nature to a cold object while the industrialization had alienated people from their individual selves and the world surrounding them. That is why in many of his poems, he emphasizes the beauty of nature unlike during the times of Enlightenment. One of Wordsworth's poems states, "One impulse from a vernal wood May teach you more of man, Of Moral Evil and of good, Than all the sages can" (Spielvogel, 646). In this poem it is clear that the poet stresses that nature can teach a man more about himself or another because of the mysterious force it possessed. Wordsworth believed that nature served as a mirror into which humans could look to learn about themselves.

Another large difference between the two periods was their thoughts on God, religion and the Church. During the Enlightenment, scientists began to introduce the idea that God had nothing to do with the creation of our world, but more of a "mechanical God" had. One big advocator for this was Voltaire. *New world encyclopedia* expressed, "In spite of an occasional positive interaction and mutual respect in isolated situations, Voltaire found himself in a lifelong battle against the Church" (New World Encyclopedia). Voltaire claimed that God had no direct involvement in the world he created, but rather allowed it to run according to its own natural laws. Because of this and his opposing views on the Church, he left a legacy for the movement known as Enlightenment because he did believe people should have the freedom of religion, but he thought that the science prevailed. During this period the philosophers also began to separate from the church because they believed it had too much power in society. However, during the Romanticism period, these thoughts were completely opposed. Instead, they believed that, "Anyone seeking God will find him anywhere" (Bristow, 2017). Along with this, the church and Christianity began to make a comeback because of their belief in individual rights and choices. For example, "The Romantics' attraction to the Middle Ages and their emphasis on emotion led them to their own widespread revival of Christianity" (Spielvogel, 649). The philosophers of the Enlightenment, especially Voltaire, had drifted away from Christianity for scientific reasons, but the Romantics' were able to revive the religion. The religion was able to make a comeback because the Romantics' saw it as an exciting religious awe that people had the choice to believe in.

Overall, Enlightenment and Romanticism shaped the world we live in today through their many changes to the way we see and live our lives. Romanticism continued some of the ideas brought up by Enlightenment such as individual freedom and freedom of religion. Both periods were a revolution in a sense that brought new ideas to light. However, Romanticism differed from Enlightenment when it came to views on science, nature, and aspects of God, religion, and the Church. Romanticism stressed that the individuals needed to express their imagination and emotion. While Romantics did continue on some of the beliefs of the Enlightenment period, they more so separated from those ideologies. Both of the periods together created the world we live in today and many of their ideas have continued on through today's time.

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