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# 18th and 19th Century European Philosophy and the Justification of Colonial and Economic Exploits

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# 18th and 19th Century European Philosophy and the Justification of Colonial and Economic Exploits

## **Comments**

Presented at the National Collegiate Honors Council conference in Seattle, WA, in October 2016.



# 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century European Philosophy and the Justification of Colonial and Economic Exploits

Danielle Platt and Ian Nell, Chapman University

European Colonial Empires form and compete with one another for territorial dominance

Pre 1700s

The theories and philosophies that have evolved over the course of human history have each influenced and affected the politics and the behaviors of the societies where they are popularized. We wish to study the sorts of relationships that may exist between popular European philosophies of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the political ideologies of the time, and why they still bear relevance in global politics today's globalized international community.

The theory of the Invisible Hand of economics, and the subsequent rise of neoclassical economic thinking marks a shift away from faith in political structures, and a faith in human potential, and non-political structures. This was a key facet of what would be come neoclassical, free-market thinking.

1700

1750

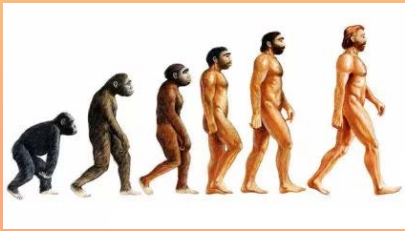
Invisible Hand Theory is popularized in free-market economics, 1759



Publishing of Denis Diderot's Ideas on Postcolonial French Philosophy, 1771

1800

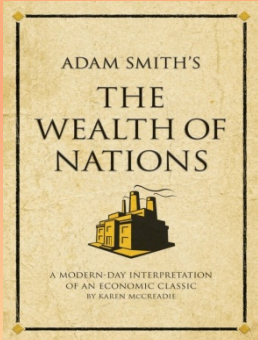
Denis Diderot's philosophies on humanitarian, economic collaboration between colonies and colonizing nations marks a significant shift in thinking that prioritized economic collaboration between colonies and colonizers, rather than direct exploitation. However, he never supported colonial freedom or sovereignty of colonized people.



1850

Darwin's Origin of Species is Published, 1859

The adulteration of Biological Darwinian theories quickly gave way to social darwinism, the social theory that people survive based on their 'fitness', and therefore, should not receive governmental or social support.



The political and economic philosophies of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries are deeply related to Eurocentric conceptions of the 'other', both in colonial and domestic senses. We wish to further a conversation about how these, and current ideologies contribute to how we may understand or justify social or political understandings of our society.

1900 and on

World Wars 1 and 2 take place, and the European Fascism takes place



<http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/25070-utilitarianism-and-empire/>  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/colonialism/#9>  
<http://ronbc.wordpress.com/2010/10/23/an-unenlightened-view-of-the-enlightenment/>  
<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/w/wsfh/0642292.0039.012/--empire-in-the-age-of-enlightenment-the-curious-case-of-baron?rgn=main;view=fulltext>