

## **Week 2: Civic and Community Engagement**

## **Modernity**

Since the term "Modern" is used to describe a wide range of periods, any definition of *modernity* must account for the context in question. Modern can mean all of post-medieval European history, in the context of dividing history into three large epochs: Antiquity, Medieval, and Modern. Likewise, it is often used to describe the Euro-American culture that arises out of the Enlightenment and continues in some way into the present. The term "Modern" is also applied to the period beginning somewhere between 1870 and 1910, through the present, and even more specifically to the 1910-1960 period.

One common use of the term, "Early Modern" is to describe the condition of Western History either since the mid-1400's, or roughly the European discovery of moveable type and the printing press, or the early 1600's, the period associated with the rise of the Enlightenment project. These periods can be characterized by:

- Rise of the nation state
- Growth of tolerance as a political and social belief
- Industrialization
- Rise of mercantilism and capitalism
- Emergence of socialist countries
- Discovery and colonization of the Non-Western world
- Rise of representative democracy
- Increasing role of science and technology
- Urbanization
- Mass literacy
- Democracy
- Human Rights

## **Renaissance World View vs Enlightenment World View**

Both the Renaissance and the Enlightenment are two significant points in world history, specifically in European history. Both periods have distinctive characteristics but share the notion of being periods of discovery in many aspects of life and living in this world. Each period has its own world view, which is basically a framework of ideas and beliefs through which people interpret the world.

The Renaissance occurred during the 14–16th centuries. This period gave significant contributions to many disciplines, mostly in the arts like music, visual painting, architecture, poetry, drama, as well as philosophy and astronomy. There was an increase of thought and

production in terms of the arts, culture, and the intellectual domain. There were also innovations in non-artistic fields like finance, politics, and technology.

The period was mostly centered on art, ancient wisdom, and religion. In addition, the period gave rise to the general movement towards freedom of thought and religion. The world view of the Renaissance was the humanistic world view with an emphasis on the power and capacity of the human being. There was also an aspect of valuing humanity, literacy, and education which became powerful tools for discovery and understanding of the world.

On the other hand, the next succeeding period, the Enlightenment, also produced a slightly different world view. In the Renaissance, the seed of discovery and knowledge was the appreciation for reason and logic. These two disciplines bloomed in the period of the Enlightenment as well as industrialization.

The Enlightenment, (17–18th centuries) science, mathematics, and technology were the core of human interest and activity. To prove this point, all other disciplines and subjects like religion, art, and history were subject to rational scrutiny. There was also a focus on social sciences and the attempt to apply rational thought and order to society and all its extensions. While the Renaissance was on the artistic side of human life, the Enlightenment focused on the human intellectual side. The Enlightenment world view contributed a great deal to today's modern world.

### **Summary:**

1. Both the Renaissance and the Enlightenment world view contributed not only to European history but the progress of human history. A world view is a definite set of ideals or beliefs of people in a specific period of time.
2. Both world views encourage the progress of discovery and knowledge. At the same time they empowered humans in their own capabilities.

3. The Renaissance world view is a departure from its predecessor, the Medieval world view. In this type of world view, there was an emphasis on art and other artistic forms. This period was also anchored and celebrates the artistic side of humanity. In addition, the Renaissance gave rise to changed human perspectives towards religion and the Church. These different perceptions allowed scrutiny and reform toward religious views and issues.

4. On the other hand, the Enlightenment world view is a continuation of the Renaissance world view except for the difference in focus. This world view is more focused on science, reason, and logic. The pursuit of discovery in the Renaissance period continued. This particular world view of objectivity, rationality, and the use of reason is still observable today in the modern era. It deals more on the human intellectual side.

5. The Renaissance world view is what prompted the movement of discovery and objectivity, though its main focus is on the humanistic perspective and view. The Enlightenment is the culmination of the use of reason, rationality, and objectivity and became the period's sole focus and viewpoint.

6. Both world views have had significant impacts on each other. The Renaissance influenced the growth of interest in reason, science, and technology. Meanwhile, the Enlightenment is still prevalent in today's modern world view. The basic tenets of objectivity and reason are still used today in many areas.

## Political Modernity

The Enlightenment, or The Age of Reason, from approximately 1650 to 1800 was an important period in the development of democracy. The Enlightenment established the idea that the natural world is best understood through close observation and reason. Several political philosophers from The Age of Reason examined human behavior in the context of nature and society. From their observations, they developed theories about human nature and the need for and purposes of government.

One well-known Enlightenment philosopher was an Englishman named Thomas Hobbes. In 1651 he wrote *Leviathan*, which described his belief that in nature, people would be in a constant state of conflict and insecurity, looking out only for themselves and their interests. His theory suggested that government is necessary to give people peace and security. The trade-off for these benefits would be surrendering some of their natural rights.

Another influential figure during the Enlightenment was British philosopher John Locke. During a self-imposed exile in Holland, a country that tolerated the free expression of religion and thought, he wrote *Two Treatises of Government*. Published in 1690, the *Treatises* rejected the claim that kings and queens had a "divine right" to rule. Locke believed instead that governments were created among naturally free people as social contracts and that rulers derived their authority from the consent of the governed. He argued that the government must act for the good of everyone and that people had the right to rebel if it failed to protect their "self-evident" natural rights of life, liberty, and property. This "right of rebellion" theory had a strong influence on American Patriots eager for independence from England.

Similar to Hobbes, Locke held that people have certain natural or "self-evident" rights, such as life, liberty, and property, which the government must respect. He understood that a government with great power might be tempted to abuse its power. To avoid this temptation, Locke proposed that government should be divided into different branches, each branch having only the power needed to fulfill its function.

More than 80 years after Locke published his views on human nature and government, Thomas Jefferson incorporated many of them into the Declaration of Independence. Locke's ideas about limited, democratic government, the right to rebel, and the opportunity to pursue natural rights clearly influenced Jefferson then and continue to influence government workings today.

In his 1743 work, *Social Contract*, French political philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau echoed Locke's assertion that government should act for the good of all people. Like Hobbes, Rousseau believed that in nature, people would languish. They would be so focused on survival and protecting themselves and their things that their lives would never be fulfilling. He argued that living in a society provides people the security and freedom to develop new skills, which in turn strengthened the society and led to growth.

Rousseau also believed the people could retain their freedom within the workings of democracy and promoted the idea that people must participate in society if they want to share in its benefits. In other words, people have a social responsibility and civic duty to be involved in their

governance. This idea of social responsibility is evident in the United States. At the local level, communities have citizens' police advisory boards and school boards, and at the international level are the Peace Corps and the Red Cross.

Other influential ideas from Rousseau's *Social Contract* include separation of church and state. These two concepts have undeniably affected democracy in the United States.

Hobbes's, Locke's, and Rousseau's political works were relevant not only during the Enlightenment period but also for today and years to come. Their observations and opinions will continue to feed debates about human nature and how people should be governed.

# **Key Political Thinkers During the Age of Enlightenment**

By Jennifer Mueller

During the 17th and early 18th centuries, philosophers started to question traditional ideas, such as the belief that kings ruled by divine right. During this period, known as the Age of Enlightenment or the Age of Reason, political thinkers argued humanity could be improved through an exploration of reason and rational dialogue. These theories inspired the American and French Revolutions, and spawned ideas that live on in America's government and institutions.

## **Locke and Liberalism**

John Locke's liberal theories inspired Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, who incorporated those ideas in America's founding documents. Generally, Locke believed a government's authority over its people came from their consent, not from conquest or some natural or divine right. Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence using many arguments he'd read in Locke's essays. In particular, Locke urged governments existed based on a metaphorical contract with the people they governed. When the government failed to uphold its end of this contract, the people had the right to revolt against it. Locke's idea that people form governments to protect their God-given rights such as freedom of expression and freedom of religion are embodied in the Constitution's Bill of Rights.

## **Rousseau's Social Contract**

Like Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau believed government authority was grounded in a social contract. However, Rousseau's governmental ideal was considerably more democratic than Locke's. According to Rousseau, the only way people could truly be free was in a direct democracy where the people governed themselves. Because representative governments can give rise to factions, allowing each citizen to vote directly on all laws is the only way the government can reflect the true will of the people. Thomas Paine was inspired by Rousseau when he wrote "The Rights of Man," his famous work denouncing Great Britain's abuses of its North American colonists.

## **Adam Smith and the Free Market**

For Locke, the primary purpose of government was the protection of private property. People would only have the freedom to engage in other pursuits if they knew their land and the fruits of their labor were protected. Adam Smith took this idea and went a step further, arguing that aside from protecting people's property, the government should be relatively hands-off in regulating markets and trading. For Smith, free trade enabled people to pursue their own self-interested desire to increase their own property. This pursuit helped supply the wants and needs of the country at large, increasing the wealth of the entire nation. Smith's concepts gave birth to free market capitalism, greatly influencing the structure of the US economy.

### **Montesquieu and Balance of Power**

French political thinker Baron de Montesquieu's "The Spirit of the Laws," published in 1748, became one of the founding texts for modern political theory and greatly influenced James Madison as he drafted the Constitution. Montesquieu was concerned that in large republics governed by representation, factions would form and run the government for their own private interests rather than for the public good. From his perspective, this threat could be eliminated by carefully crafting the branches of government so that each had checks on the others. If no one branch was supreme, Montesquieu reasoned, "ambition counteracts ambition," and no faction would be able to take control. His ideas were the foundation of the US's system of checks and balances.

## **Modernity**

**Modernity** refers to the condition or quality of being modern. It encompasses the cultural, social, and intellectual changes that have occurred in societies transitioning from traditional to contemporary ways of life. Modernity is often associated with several key characteristics:

1. **Rationalization:** The process of applying logical and systematic approaches to various aspects of life, including governance, economics, and personal behavior. This shift towards rational thinking is a hallmark of modernity (Weber, 1922).
2. **Individualism:** Modernity emphasizes the importance of individual rights, autonomy, and self-expression over collective or traditional values. This focus on personal identity and self-determination is central to modern thinking (Taylor, 1989).
3. **Progress and Innovation:** Modern societies often embrace the idea of progress, believing in the continuous improvement of human conditions through technological advancements, social reforms, and economic development (Hegel, 1807).
4. **Globalization:** Modernity has facilitated the interconnectedness of societies through global trade, communication, and cultural exchange. This interconnectedness reflects the global nature of contemporary life (Sklair, 2002).
5. **Cultural Change:** Modernity brings about significant cultural shifts, including changes in family structures, gender roles, and social norms. These changes reflect evolving attitudes towards tradition, authority, and individual freedom (Giddens, 1991).

## **Concept and Emergence of Modernity**

Modernity involves several key concepts:

6. **Rationalization:** Max Weber's concept of rationalization describes the shift towards logical and efficient methods of thinking and organizing societies, contrasting with traditional, emotional, or mystical approaches (Weber, 1922).
7. **Individualism:** Modernity emphasizes individual autonomy and personal rights over communal and familial ties, reflecting a shift towards personal freedom and self-expression (Taylor, 1989).

8. **Progress and Innovation:** Modernity is associated with the belief in progress and continuous improvement, including technological advancements and social reforms aimed at enhancing human well-being (Hegel, 1807).
9. **Globalization:** Modernity has facilitated greater interconnectedness among societies, with the exchange of ideas, cultures, and economic practices shaping a globalized world (Sklair, 2002).
10. **Cultural Changes:** Modernity has led to significant cultural shifts, including changes in family structures, gender roles, and social norms, reflecting evolving attitudes towards tradition and authority (Giddens, 1991).

## Modernization

**Modernization** is the process through which societies transition from traditional or pre-modern states to modern ones. It involves a range of social, economic, and political changes aimed at achieving greater efficiency, technological advancement, and economic growth. Key aspects of modernization include:

1. **Economic Development:** Modernization often involves industrialization and the development of a market economy. This includes the expansion of industries, the creation of infrastructure, and the adoption of new technologies to improve productivity (Rostow, 1960).
2. **Urbanization:** As societies modernize, there is typically a shift from rural to urban living. Urbanization leads to the growth of cities and changes in social dynamics, as people move to urban areas for economic opportunities and improved living conditions (Hall, 1984).
3. **Institutional Change:** Modernization involves the development and reform of institutions, including government, education, and legal systems. These changes aim to create more effective, efficient, and equitable institutions (Lerner, 1958).
4. **Social Change:** The process of modernization often leads to shifts in social structures and norms. This includes changes in family roles, gender relations, and social hierarchies as societies adapt to new economic and technological conditions (Inglehart, 1997).
5. **Cultural Adaptation:** Modernization brings about cultural changes as societies adapt to new ways of life. This can include shifts in values, attitudes, and practices as traditional ways of life are replaced or modified (Nisbet, 1969).
6. **Education and Knowledge:** Increased emphasis on education and scientific knowledge is a key component of modernization. Education systems are expanded and improved to support economic development and social progress (Beineke, 1987).

## Emergence of Modern Society

The emergence of modern society is associated with several key historical developments:

1. **The Enlightenment:** This intellectual movement of the 17th and 18th centuries emphasized reason, individualism, and skepticism of traditional authority. Key figures such as John Locke, Voltaire, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau contributed to the development of democratic ideas with limited influence of clergy.(Outram, 1995).
2. **The Industrial Revolution:** Beginning in the late 18th century, the Industrial Revolution brought significant technological and economic changes, leading to the growth of industries and urbanization (Ashton, 1997).
3. **The French and American Revolutions:** These revolutions introduced concepts of liberty, equality, and fraternity, challenging traditional hierarchies and influencing the development of modern democratic states (Hobsbawm, 1996).
4. **Colonialism and Globalization:** European colonial expansion spread modern ideas and practices across the globe, contributing to the development of a globalized world and influencing economic and cultural exchanges (Pagden, 2001).
5. **Social Movements:** Movements such as the women's suffrage movement, civil rights movements, and labor movements have significantly shaped modern societal values and norms, advocating for greater equality and social justice (Tilly, 2004).

The evolution of modern society is a complex and multifaceted process that spans several centuries. It involves significant changes in economic, political, social, and cultural domains. Here's an overview of the key stages and factors in this evolution:

## 1. Medieval Europe

Before modernity, societies were largely agrarian, feudal, and characterized by rigid social hierarchies. Traditional societies were predominantly rural, with social structures often based on kinship, religion, and localized economies.

- **Agrarian Economy:** Predominantly based on agriculture and subsistence farming.
- **Feudal Structures:** Social and economic systems were hierarchical, with land ownership and power concentrated in the hands of a few.
- **Theocracy:** Clergy and Church played a central role in governance and daily life, with limited emphasis scientific and rational explanations.

## 2. The Enlightenment (17th-18th Centuries)

The Enlightenment was an intellectual and cultural movement that laid the groundwork for modernity by emphasizing reason, science, and individual rights.

- **Rational Thought:** Thinkers like John Locke, Voltaire, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau advocated for reason and skepticism of traditional authority.
- **Human Rights:** The concept of natural rights and the social contract influenced ideas about democracy and individual freedoms.
- **Scientific Advancements:** The Scientific Revolution, with figures like Isaac Newton and Galileo Galilei, promoted empirical research and technological progress.

### 3. The Industrial Revolution (Late 18th-19th Centuries)

The Industrial Revolution marked a transformative period characterized by technological innovation and economic change.

- **Mechanization:** Introduction of machinery and industrial processes revolutionized production methods.
- **Urbanization:** Rapid growth of cities as people moved from rural areas to work in factories.
- **Capitalism:** Rise of market economies and private ownership, leading to economic expansion and new social classes.

### 4. The Age of Revolution (Late 18th-19th Centuries)

This period saw significant political and social upheaval, contributing to the development of modern democratic states.

- **Political Revolutions:** The French and American Revolutions introduced principles of liberty, equality, and democratic governance.
- **Social Reforms:** Movements for labor rights, women's suffrage, and abolition of slavery emerged, challenging traditional social norms.

### 5. The 20th Century

The 20th century brought about further transformations in modern society, including advancements in technology, shifts in political structures, and changes in social norms.

- **Technological Advancements:** Rapid development in communication, transportation, and information technologies transformed daily life and global interactions.
- **Globalization:** Increased interconnectedness through trade, communication, and cultural exchange.
- **Social Movements:** Civil rights, feminist, and environmental movements challenged existing social and political structures.

### 6. Postmodernity (Late 20th Century-Present)

Postmodernity reflects a shift from the certainties of modernity towards a more fragmented, diverse, and complex understanding of society.

- **Pluralism:** Emphasis on diversity and the coexistence of multiple perspectives and identities.
- **Technological Integration:** Pervasive use of digital technologies and the internet, impacting all aspects of life.
- **Cultural Change:** Questioning of traditional narratives and ideologies, with a focus on relativism and the deconstruction of established norms.

### Key Factors in the Evolution of Modern Society

1. **Economic Changes:** Transition from agrarian economies to industrial and post-industrial economies, marked by technological innovation and globalization.
2. **Political Developments:** Shift from absolute monarchies to democratic forms of governance, with increasing emphasis on human rights and democratic participation.
3. **Social Transformations:** Changes in family structures, gender roles, and social norms, influenced by movements for equality and social justice.
4. **Technological Advancements:** Innovations in technology, from the steam engine to digital technology, have continuously reshaped economies and societies.
5. **Cultural Shifts:** Evolving cultural values and practices, including the rise of democracy, individualism, and postmodern critiques of traditional narratives.

The evolution of modern society is a dynamic and ongoing process characterized by significant shifts in economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions. From the agrarian societies of the pre-modern era to the complex, interconnected world of today, modernity represents a continual adaptation to new challenges and opportunities.

### Foundations of Modern Society

Modern society is built upon several foundational elements:

1. **Industrialization:** The Industrial Revolution marked a major shift from agrarian economies to industrial ones, characterized by mass production and mechanized manufacturing. This period saw the rise of factories and urbanization as people moved to cities for employment opportunities (Mokyr, 1990).
2. **Urbanization:** As industrial activities concentrated in urban areas, cities expanded rapidly. This migration from rural areas to urban centers resulted in new social and economic dynamics, shaping the modern societal landscape (Hall, 1984).

3. **Capitalism:** Capitalism, with its emphasis on private ownership and market-driven economies, became a central aspect of modern societies. It led to the development of global trade networks and influenced various economic practices (Smith, 1776).
4. **Democratic Governance:** The rise of democratic governance marked a shift from monarchies and autocracies to more participatory political systems. This transition emphasized representative government and individual rights (Tilly, 2007).
5. **Scientific and Technological Advancements:** The rapid pace of technological innovation has transformed numerous aspects of life, including communication, transportation, and healthcare. These advancements have been fundamental in shaping modern societies (Rosenberg & Birdzell, 1986).
6. **Social Mobility:** Modern societies often promote the idea of social mobility, allowing individuals to improve their social and economic status through education and personal achievement (Boudon, 1974).