

# Modern Politics - CS

classical liberalism individual liberty

**Modernity** → focus on markets (majorly)

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.

## Enlightenment and Political Theory

The Enlightenment is most identified with its political accomplishments. The era is marked by three political revolutions, which together lay the basis for modern, republican, constitutional democracies: The English Revolution (1688), the American Revolution (1775–83), and the French Revolution (1789–99). The success at explaining and understanding the natural world encourages the Enlightenment project of re-making the social/political world, in accord with the models we allegedly find in our reason. Enlightenment philosophers find that the existing social and political orders do not withstand critical scrutiny. Existing political and social authority is shrouded in religious myth and mystery and founded on obscure traditions. The criticism of existing institutions is supplemented with the positive work of constructing in theory the model of institutions as they ought to be. We owe to this period the basic model of government founded upon the consent of the governed; the articulation of the political ideals of freedom and equality and the theory of their institutional realization; the articulation of a list of basic individual human rights to be respected and realized by any legitimate political system; the articulation and promotion of toleration of religious diversity as a virtue to be respected in a well ordered society; the conception of the basic political powers as organized in a system of checks and balances; and other now-familiar features of western democracies. However, for all the enduring accomplishments of Enlightenment political philosophy, it is not clear that human reason proves powerful enough to put a concrete, positive authoritative ideal in place of the objects of its criticism. As in the epistemological domain, reason shows its power more convincingly in criticizing authorities than in establishing them. Here too the question of the limits of reason is one of the main philosophical legacies of the period. These limits are arguably vividly illustrated by the course of the French Revolution. The explicit ideals of the French Revolution are the Enlightenment ideals of individual freedom and equality, but, as the revolutionaries attempt to devise rational, secular institutions to put in place of those they have violently overthrown, eventually they have recourse to violence and terror in order to control and govern the people. The devolution of the French Revolution into the Reign of Terror is perceived by many as proving the emptiness and hypocrisy of Enlightenment reason, and is one of the main factors which account for the end of the Enlightenment as an historical period.

The political revolutions of the Enlightenment, especially the French and the American, were informed and guided to a significant extent by prior political philosophy in the period. Though Thomas Hobbes, in his *Leviathan* (1651), defends the absolute power of the political sovereign, and is to that extent opposed to the revolutionaries and reformers in England, this work is a founding work of Enlightenment political theory. Hobbes' work originates the modern social contract theory, which incorporates Enlightenment conceptions of the relation of the individual to the state. According to the general social contract model, political authority is grounded in an agreement (often understood as ideal, rather than real) among individuals, each of whom aims in this agreement to advance his rational self-interest by establishing a common political authority over all. Thus, according to the general contract model (though this is more clear in later contract theorists such as Locke and Rousseau than in Hobbes himself), political authority is grounded not in conquest, natural or divinely instituted hierarchy, or in obscure myths and traditions, but rather in the rational consent of the governed. In initiating this model, Hobbes takes a naturalistic, scientific approach to the question of how political society ought to be organized (against the background of a clear-eyed, unsentimental conception of human nature), and thus

decisively influences the Enlightenment process of secularization and rationalization in political and social philosophy.

Baruch Spinoza also greatly contributes to the development of Enlightenment political philosophy in its early years. The metaphysical doctrines of the *Ethics* (1677) lay the groundwork for his influence on the age. Spinoza's arguments against Cartesian dualism and in favor of substance monism, the claim in particular that there can only be one substance, God or nature, was taken to have radical implications in the domains of politics, ethics and religion throughout the period. Spinoza's employment of philosophical reason leads to the denial of the existence of a transcendent, creator, providential, law-giving God; this establishes the opposition between the teachings of philosophy, on the one hand, and the traditional orienting practical beliefs (moral, religious, political) of the people, on the other hand, an opposition that is one important aspect of the culture of the Enlightenment. In his main political work, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1677), Spinoza, building on his rationalist naturalism, opposes superstition, argues for toleration and the subordination of religion to the state, and pronounces in favor of qualified democracy. Liberalism is perhaps the most characteristic political philosophy of the Enlightenment, and Spinoza, in this text primarily, is one of its originators.

However, John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* (1690) is the classical source of modern liberal political theory. In his *First Treatise of Government*, Locke attacks Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha* (1680), which epitomizes the sort of political theory the Enlightenment opposes. Filmer defends the right of kings to exercise absolute authority over their subjects on the basis of the claim that they inherit the authority God vested in Adam at creation. Though Locke's assertion of the natural freedom and equality of human beings in the *Second Treatise* is starkly and explicitly opposed to Filmer's view, it is striking that the cosmology underlying Locke's assertions is closer to Filmer's than to Spinoza's. According to Locke, in order to understand the nature and source of legitimate political authority, we have to understand our relations in the state of nature. Drawing upon the natural law tradition, Locke argues that it is evident to our natural reason that we are all absolutely subject to our Lord and Creator, but that, in relation to each other, we exist naturally in a state of equality "wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another" (*Second Treatise*, §4). We also exist naturally in a condition of freedom, insofar as we may do with ourselves and our possessions as we please, within the constraints of the fundamental law of nature. The law of nature "teaches all mankind ... that, being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions" (§6). That we are governed in our natural condition by such a substantive moral law, legislated by God and known to us through our natural reason, implies that the state of nature is not Hobbes' war of all against all. However, since there is lacking any human authority over all to judge of disputes and enforce the law, it is a condition marred by "inconveniences", in which possession of natural freedom, equality and possessions is insecure. According to Locke, we rationally quit this natural condition by contracting together to set over ourselves a political authority, charged with promulgating and enforcing a single, clear set of laws, for the sake of guaranteeing our natural rights, liberties and possessions. The civil, political law, founded ultimately upon the consent of the governed, does not cancel the natural law, according to Locke, but merely serves to draw that law closer. "[T]he law of nature stands as an eternal rule to all men" (§135). Consequently, when established political power violates that law, the people are justified in overthrowing it. Locke's argument for the right to revolt against a government that opposes the purposes for which legitimate government is taken by some to

justify the political revolution in the context of which he writes (the English revolution) and, almost a hundred years later, by others to justify the American revolution as well.

Though Locke's liberalism has been tremendously influential, his political theory is founded on doctrines of natural law and religion that are not nearly as evident as Locke assumes. Locke's reliance on the natural law tradition is typical of Enlightenment political and moral theory. According to the natural law tradition, as the Enlightenment makes use of it, we can know through the use of our unaided reason that we all – all human beings, universally – stand in particular moral relations to each other. The claim that we can apprehend through our unaided reason a *universal* moral order exactly because moral qualities and relations (in particular human freedom and equality) belong to the nature of things, is attractive in the Enlightenment for obvious reasons. However, as noted above, the scientific apprehension of nature in the period does not support, and in fact opposes, the claim that the alleged moral qualities and relations (or, indeed, that *any* moral qualities and relations) are *natural*. According to a common Enlightenment assumption, as humankind clarifies the laws of nature through the advance of natural science and philosophy, the true moral and political order will be revealed with it. This view is expressed explicitly by the *philosophe* Marquis de Condorcet, in his *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind* (published posthumously in 1795 and which, perhaps better than any other work, lays out the paradigmatically Enlightenment view of history of the human race as a continual progress to perfection). But, in fact, advance in knowledge of the laws of nature in the science of the period does not help with discernment of a natural political or moral order. This asserted relationship between natural scientific knowledge and the political and moral order is under great stress already in the Enlightenment. With respect to Lockean liberalism, though his assertion of the moral and political claims (natural freedom, equality, et cetera) continues to have considerable force for us, the grounding of these claims in a religious cosmology does not. The question of how to ground our claims to natural freedom and equality is one of the main philosophical legacies of the Enlightenment.

The rise and development of liberalism in Enlightenment political thought has many relations with the rise of the mercantile class (the bourgeoisie) and the development of what comes to be called "civil society", the society characterized by work and trade in pursuit of private property. Locke's *Second Treatise* contributes greatly to the project of articulating a political philosophy to serve the interests and values of this ascending class. Locke claims that the end or purpose of political society is the preservation and protection of property (though he defines property broadly to include not only external property but life and liberties as well). According to Locke's famous account, persons acquire rightful ownership in external things that are originally given to us all by God as a common inheritance, independently of the state and prior to its involvement, insofar as we "mix our labor with them". The civil freedom that Locke defines, as something protected by the force of political laws, comes increasingly to be interpreted as the freedom to trade, to exchange without the interference of governmental regulation. Within the context of the Enlightenment, economic freedom is a salient interpretation of the individual freedom highly valued in the period. Adam Smith, a prominent member of the Scottish Enlightenment, describes in his *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776) some of the laws of civil society, as a sphere distinct from political society as such, and thus contributes significantly to the founding of political economy (later called merely "economics"). His is one of many voices in the Enlightenment advocating for free trade and for minimal government regulation of markets. The trading house floor, in which people of various nationalities, languages, cultures,

religions come together and trade, each in pursuit of his own self-interest, but, through this pursuit, supplying the wants of their respective nations and increasing its wealth, represents for some Enlightenment thinkers the benign, peaceful, universal rational order that they wish to see replace the violent, confessional strife that characterized the then-recent past of Europe.

However, the liberal conception of the government as properly protecting economic freedom of citizens and private property comes into conflict in the Enlightenment with the value of democracy. James Madison confronts this tension in the context of arguing for the adoption of the U.S. Constitution (in his Federalist #10). Madison argues that popular government (pure democracy) is subject to the evil of factions; in a pure democracy, a majority bound together by a private interest, relative to the whole, has the capacity to impose its particular will on the whole. The example most on Madison's mind is that those without property (the many) may seek to bring about governmental re-distribution of the property of the propertied class (the few), perhaps in the name of that other Enlightenment ideal, equality. If, as in Locke's theory, the government's protection of an individual's freedom is encompassed within the general end of protecting a person's property, then, as Madison argues, the proper form of the government cannot be pure democracy, and the will of the people must be officially determined in some other way than by directly polling the people.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's political theory, as presented in his *On the Social Contract* (1762), presents a contrast to the Lockean liberal model. Though commitment to the political ideals of freedom and equality constitutes a common ground for Enlightenment political philosophy, it is not clear not only how these values have a home in nature as Enlightenment science re-conceives it, but also how concretely to interpret each of these ideals and how properly to balance them against each other. Contrary to Madison, Rousseau argues that direct (pure) democracy is the only form of government in which human freedom can be realized. Human freedom, according to Rousseau's interpretation, is possible only through governance according to what he calls "the general will," which is the will of the body politic, formed through the original contract, concretely determined in an assembly in which all citizens participate. Rousseau's account intends to avert the evils of factions by structural elements of the original contract. The contract consists in the self-alienation by each associate of all rights and possessions to the body politic. Because each alienates all, each is an equal member of the body politic, and the terms and conditions are the same for all. The emergence of factions is avoided insofar as the good of each citizen is, and is understood to be, equally (because wholly) dependent on the general will. Legislation supports this identification with the general will by preserving the original equality established in the contract, prominently through maintaining a measure of economic equality. Rousseau's account of the ideal relation of the individual citizen to the state differs from Locke's; in Rousseau's account, the individual must be actively engaged in political life in order to maintain the identification of his supremely authoritative will with the general will, whereas in Locke the emphasis is on the limits of governmental authority with respect to the expressions of the individual will. Though Locke's liberal model is more representative of the Enlightenment in general, Rousseau's political theory, which in some respects presents a revived classical model modified within the context of Enlightenment values, in effect poses many of the enduring questions regarding the meaning and interpretation of political freedom and equality within the modern state.

Both Madison and Rousseau, like most political thinkers of the period, are influenced by Baron de Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), which is one of the founding texts of modern

political theory. Though Montesquieu's treatise belongs to the tradition of liberalism in political theory, given his scientific approach to social, legal and political systems, his influence extends beyond this tradition. Montesquieu argues that the system of legislation for a people varies appropriately with the particular circumstances of the people. He provides specific analysis of how climate, fertility of the soil, population size, et cetera, affect legislation. He famously distinguishes three main forms of governments: republics (which can either be democratic or aristocratic), monarchies and despotisms. He describes leading characteristics of each. His argument that functional democracies require the population to possess civic virtue in high measure, a virtue that consists in valuing public good above private interest, influences later Enlightenment theorists, including both Rousseau and Madison. He describes the threat of factions to which Madison and Rousseau respond in different (indeed opposite) ways. He provides the basic structure and justification for the balance of political powers that Madison later incorporates into the U.S. Constitution.

It is striking how unenlightened many of the Enlightenment's celebrated thinkers are concerning issues of race and of gender (regarding race, see *Race and Enlightenment: A Reader*, edited by Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze). For all the public concern with the allegedly universal "rights of man" in the Enlightenment, the rights of women and of non-white people are generally overlooked in the period. (Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) is a noteworthy exception.) When Enlightenment thinkers do turn their attention to the social standing of women or of non-white people, they tend to spout unreasoned prejudice. Moreover, while the philosophies of the Enlightenment generally aspire or pretend to universal truth, unattached to particular time, place or culture, Enlightenment writings are rife with rank ethno- and Eurocentrism, often explicit.

In the face of such tensions within the Enlightenment, one response is to affirm the power of the Enlightenment to improve humanity and society long beyond the end of the eighteenth century, indeed, down to the present day and into the future. This response embraces the Enlightenment and interprets more recent emancipation movements and achievement of recognition of the rights and dignity of traditionally oppressed and marginalized groups as expressions of Enlightenment ideals and aspirations. Critics of the Enlightenment respond differently to such tensions. Critics see them as symptoms of disorder, ideology, perversity, futility or falsehood that afflict the very core of the Enlightenment itself. (See James Schmidt's "What Enlightenment Project?" for discussion of critics of the Enlightenment.) Famously, Adorno and Horkheimer interpret Nazi death camps as the result of "the dialectic of the Enlightenment", as what historically becomes of the supremacy of instrumental reason asserted in the Enlightenment. As another example, we may point to some post-modern feminists, who argue, in opposition to the liberal feminists who embrace broadly Enlightenment ideals and conceptions, that the essentialism and universalism associated with Enlightenment ideals are both false and intrinsically hostile to the aspirations to self-realization of women and of other traditionally oppressed groups. (See Strickland and the essays in Akkerman and Stuurman.) This entry is not the place to delineate strains of opposition to the Enlightenment, but it is worth noting that post-Enlightenment social and political struggles to achieve equality or recognition for traditionally marginalized or oppressed groups are sometimes self-consciously grounded in the Enlightenment and sometimes marked by explicit opposition to the Enlightenment's conceptions or presuppositions.

## 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.

The three main political philosophers of the Enlightenment period—Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau—each had a different view of human nature and how people should be governed. Hobbes believed that people are naturally self-interested and will do whatever it takes to survive. He thought that a strong central government was necessary to keep people in line. Locke believed that people are naturally good and will work together for the common good. He thought that governments should be based on the consent of the governed and that they should have a limited role. Rousseau believed that people are naturally good but can be corrupted by society. He thought that governments should be based on the general will of the people and that they should have a strong role in protecting individual rights. All three philosophers had a significant influence on the development of modern democratic governments.

## 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.

## Enlightenment and Political ideas

Enlightenment ideas on politics were rooted in John Locke's *Two Treatises on Government* (1694). Locke's basic idea was that government, rather than being at the whim of an absolute monarch with no checks on his power, existed merely as a trust to carry out the will of the people and protect their "lives, liberty, and property." If it failed in its duties or acted arbitrarily, the subjects had the right to form a new government, by revolution if necessary.

Locke's ideas largely summarized the achievements of the English Revolution of the 1600's. They had a tremendous impact on political thinkers in France chafing under the corrupt reigns of Louis XV and Louis XVI. Three of these men, Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau would profoundly influence French political thought and provide the theoretical justification for the French Revolution.

Montesquieu, sometimes seen as the father of political science, looked at various types of government and analyzed what made them work in his book, *The Spirit of the Laws*. Among the ideas he supposedly derived from England was the separation of powers in government, a vital part of our own constitution.

Voltaire wrote on a wide range of topics, but should be remembered here for advocating more civil and political liberties, at least for educated people who can understand the implications of their actions. Voltaire was less clear on what rights the illiterate masses should have.

Finally, there was Rousseau who said that people could only legitimately follow laws they themselves have made. Otherwise, they were the victims of someone else's tyranny. Therefore the ideal state is a small-scale democracy in which everyone participates. Together, the ideas of Locke, Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau provided the basic ideas we have today on personal rights and liberties and how a government can best be structured to guarantee those rights and liberties.

In economics, the most important figure was Adam Smith, whose *The Wealth of Nations* pushed for a wholly new attitude toward economics. Smith saw people as selfish and willing to work much harder and produce much more if they had the incentive to do so. He saw the mercantilism of the 1600's and 1700's, where the state tried to import gold and silver while exporting its goods, as stifling to an economy. Therefore, doing away with mercantilist monopolies and restrictions would provide more incentive to produce. There was no need to regulate the market since people's greed and the law of supply and demand would make the market self-regulating. Smith's free market policy, known as *laissez faire* ("hands off") was widely adopted in the 1800's as Britain, Europe, and the United States rapidly industrialized. It is still a vital part of our economic thinking today.