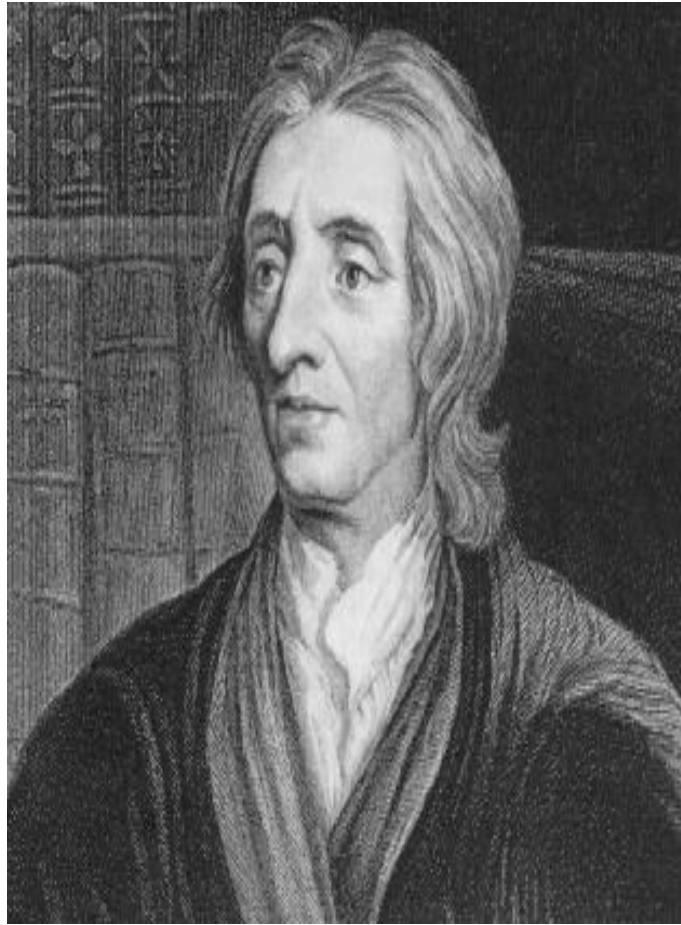


John Locke



John Locke, who wrote a political work called *Two Treatises of Government*, viewed the exercise of political power quite differently. He argued against the absolute rule of one person.

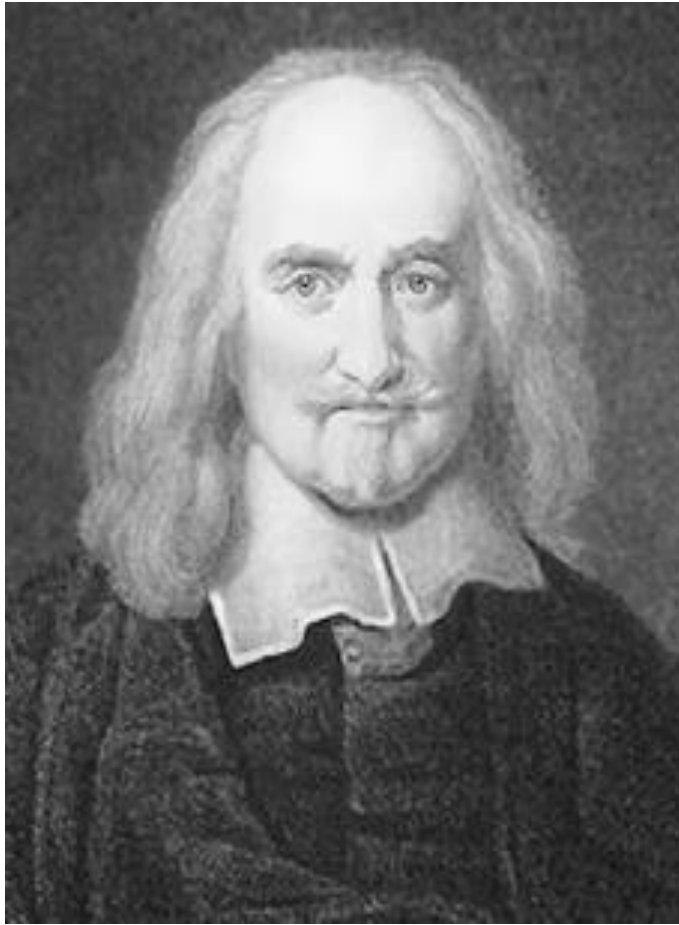
Unlike Hobbes, Locke believed that before society was organized, humans lived in a state of equality and freedom rather than a state of war. In this state of nature, humans had certain **natural rights** – rights with which they were born. These included rights to life, liberty, and property.

Like Hobbes, however, Locke believed that problems existed in the state of nature. People found it difficult to protect their natural rights. For that reason, they agreed to establish a government to ensure the protection of their rights.

The contract between people and government involved mutual obligations. Government would protect the rights of the people, and the people would act reasonably toward government. However, if a government broke the contract – if a monarch, for example, failed to live up to the obligation to protect subjects' natural rights – the people might form a new government.

To Locke, people meant the landholding aristocracy, not the landless masses. Locke was not an advocate of democracy, but his ideas proved important to both Americans and French in the 18th century. These ideas were used to support demands for constitutional government, the rule of law, and the protection of rights. Locke's ideas can be found in the American Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution.

Thomas Hobbes

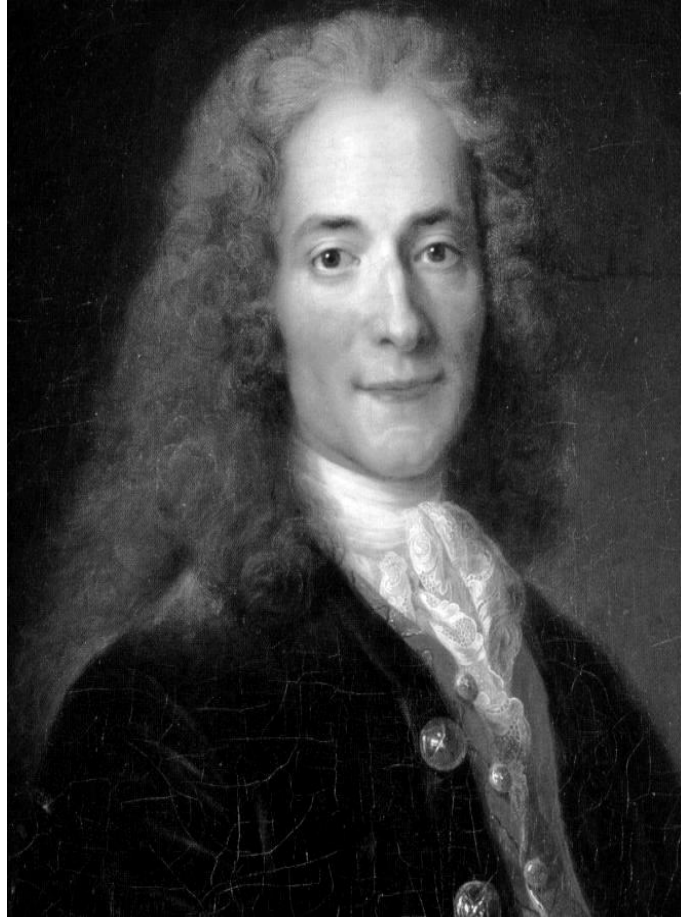


Thomas Hobbes was alarmed by the revolution upheavals in England. He wrote *Leviathan*, a work on political thought, to try to deal with the problem of disorder. *Leviathan* was published in 1651.

Hobbes claimed that before society was organized human life was “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” Humans were guided not by reason and moral ideals but by a ruthless struggle for self-preservation.

To save themselves from destroying one another, people made a social contract and agreed to form a state. Hobbes called the state “the great Leviathan to which we owe our peace and defense.” People in the state agreed to be governed by an absolute ruler who possessed unlimited power. Rebellion must be suppressed. To Hobbes, such absolute power was needed to preserve order in society.

Voltaire



The greatest figure of the Enlightenment was Francois-Marie Arouet, known simply as Voltaire. A Parisian, Voltaire came from a prosperous middle-class family. He wrote an almost endless stream of pamphlets, novels, plays, letters, essays, and histories, which brought him both fame and wealth.

Voltaire was especially well known for his criticism of Christianity and his strong belief in religious toleration. He fought against religious intolerance in France. In 1763, he penned his *Treatise on Toleration*, in which he reminded governments that “all men are brothers under God.”

Throughout his life, Voltaire championed **deism**, an 18th century religious philosophy based on reason and natural law. Deism built on the idea of the Newtonian world—machine. In the Deists’ view, a mechanic (God) had created the universe. To Voltaire and most other philosophes, the universe was like a clock. God, the clockmaker, had created it, set it in motion, and allowed it to run without his interference, according to its own natural laws.

Montesquieu



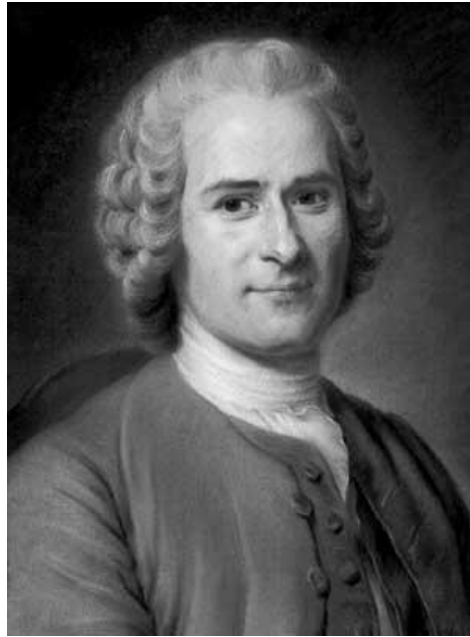
Charles-Louis de Secondat, the Baron de Montesquieu, came from the French nobility. His most famous work, *The Spirit of the Laws*, was published in 1748. In this study of governments, Montesquieu tried to use the scientific methods to find the natural laws that govern the social and political relationships of human beings.

Montesquieu identified three basic kinds of governments: (1) republics, suitable for small states; (2) despotism, appropriate for large states; and (3) monarchies, ideal for moderate-size states. He used England as an example of a monarchy.

Montesquieu believed that England's government had three branches: the executive (the monarch), the legislative (the parliament), and the judicial (the courts of law.) The government functioned through a separation of powers. In this separation, the executive, legislative, and judicial powers of the government limit and control each other in a system of checks and balances. By preventing any one person from gaining too much power, this system provides the greatest freedom and security for the state.

Montesquieu's analysis of the system of checks and balances through separation of powers was his most lasting contribution to political thought. The translation of Montesquieu's work into English made it available to American philosophers, who took his principles and worked them into the United States Constitution.

Rousseau



By the late 1760s, a new generation of philosophes had come to maturity. Most famous was **Jean-Jacques Rousseau**. The young Rousseau wandered through France and Italy holding various jobs. Eventually he made his way to Paris, where he was introduced into the circle of philosophes. He did not like the city life, however, and often withdrew into long periods of solitude.

In his *Discourse on the Origins of the Inequality of Mankind*, Rousseau argued that people had adopted laws and government in order to preserve their private property. In the process, they had become enslaved by government. What, then, should people do to regain their freedom?

In his famous work *The Social Contract*, Rousseau presented his concept of the **social contract**. Through a social contract, an entire society agrees to be governed by its general will. Individuals who wish instead to follow their own self-interests must be forced to abide by the general will. “This means nothing less than that [they] will be forced to be free,” said Rousseau. Thus, liberty is achieved by being forced to follow what is best for the “general will,” because the general will represents what is best for the entire community.

Another important work by Rousseau is *Emile*. Written in the form of a novel, the work is general discussion “on the education of the natural man.” Rousseau argues that education should foster, and not restrict, children’s natural instincts.

Unlike many Enlightenment thinkers, Rousseau believed that emotions, as well as reason, were important to human development. He sought a balance between heart and mind, between emotions and reason.

Rousseau did not necessarily practice what he preached. His own children were sent to orphanages, where many children died at a young age. Rousseau also viewed woman as being “naturally” different from men: “To fulfill her functions... [a woman] needs a soft life ... How much care and tenderness does she need to hold her family together.” To Rousseau, women should be educated for their roles as wives and mothers by learning obedience and the nurturing skills that would enable them to provide loving care for their husbands and children. Not everyone in the 18th century agreed with Rousseau, however.

Sir William Blackstone



Sir William Blackstone (1723-1780) was a great English legal scholar whose philosophy and writings greatly influenced British Law, American Law, and the ideas of the American Founding Fathers.

Blackstone's great work, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, influenced the people who wrote the U. S. Constitution. Blackstone wrote the *Commentaries* to organize and explain English law. At the time, English law was very confusing; Blackstone's writings organized and simplified the system.

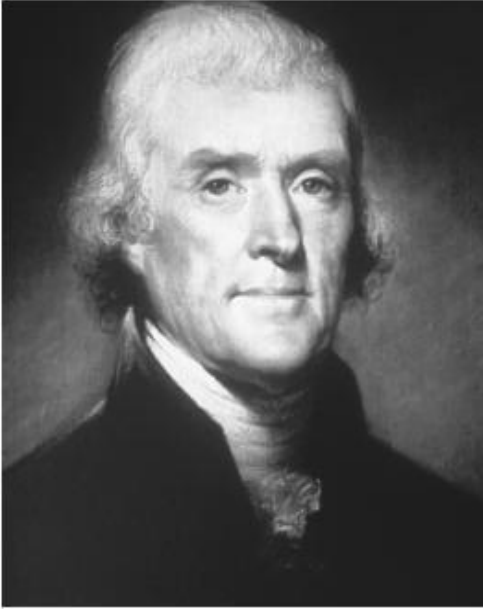
Like John Locke, Blackstone taught that man was created by God and granted fundamental rights by God. Man's law must be based on God's law.

Blackstone believed that it was, *better that ten guilty persons escape than that one innocent suffer*, this was known as Blackstone's Ratio, and was repeatedly cited by Ben Franklin and other Founding Fathers as an argument for American principles of justice such as "innocent until proven guilty".

The American Founding Fathers referred to Blackstone's writings more than to any other English or American writer. In the United States, the *Commentaries* influenced John Adams, John Marshall, James Wilson, and John Jay; and the *Commentaries* are cited in U.S. Supreme Court decisions between 10 and 12 times every year.

Robert Ferguson notes that "all our formative documents — the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Federalist Papers and the seminal decisions of the Supreme Court under John Marshall — were drafted by attorneys [who were very familiar with] Sir William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. So much was this the case that the *Commentaries* rank second only to the Bible as a literary and intellectual influence on the history of American institutions".

Thomas Jefferson



Thomas Jefferson (April 13, 1743 – July 4, 1826) was an American Founding Father who was the main author of the United States Declaration of Independence (1776) and the third President of the United States (1801–1809).

Jefferson's concepts of democracy were rooted in the Enlightenment. He viewed democracy as an expression of society as a whole, and he called for national self-determination, cultural uniformity, and education of all the people (or all the males, as he believed at the time). Jefferson believed that public education and a free press were essential to a democratic nation: "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free it expects what never was and never will be....The people cannot be safe without information. Where the press is free, and every man able to read, all is safe".

A leader in the Enlightenment, Jefferson spoke five languages and was deeply interested in science, religion and philosophy. His interests led him to assist in founding the University of Virginia in his post-presidency years. His views on slavery were complex, and changed over the course of his life. He was a leading American opponent of the international slave trade, and presided over its abolition in 1807. However, Jefferson's legacy as a champion of Enlightenment ideals has been challenged by modern historians, who find his continued ownership of hundreds of slaves at Monticello to be in conflict with his stated views on freedom and the equality of men.

Enlightenment ideas were applied by Thomas Jefferson in the American Declaration of Independence. The Declaration recognized the existence of natural rights such as the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It stated that the purpose of government was to protect these rights. This demonstrated the strong influence of John Locke on colonial America.

In the **Declaration of Independence**, Jefferson put forth many of the ideas of Enlightenment thinkers:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the People to abolish it, and to institute new Government..."

John Calvin



John Calvin was educated in his native France. After his conversion to Protestantism, however, he was forced to flee Catholic France for the safety of Switzerland. In 1536, he published *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, a summary of Protestant thought. This work immediately gave Calvin a reputation as one of the new leaders of Protestantism.

On most important doctrines, Calvin stood very close to Luther. He too, believed in the doctrine of justification by faith alone to explain how humans achieved salvation. However, Calvin also placed much emphasis on the all-powerful nature of God – what Calvin called the “power, grace, and glory of God.”

Calvin’s emphasis on the all-powerful nature of God led him to other ideas. One of these ideas was predestination. This “eternal decree,” as Calvin called it, meant that God had determined in advance who would be saved (the elect) and who would be damned (the reprobate). According to Calvin, “He has once for all determined, both whom he would admit to salvation, and whom he would condemn to destruction.”

The belief in predestination gave later Calvinists the firm conviction that they were doing God’s work on Earth. This conviction in turn made them determined to spread their faith to other people. Calvinism became a dynamic and activist faith.

In 1536, Calvin began working to reform the city of Geneva. He created a church government that used both clergy and laity in the service of the church. The Consistory, a special body for enforcing moral discipline, was set up as a court to oversee the moral life and doctrinal purity of Genevans. The Consistory had the right to punish people who deviated from the church’s teachings and moral principles. Citizens in Geneva were punished for such varied crimes as dancing, singing, obscene songs, drunkenness, swearing, and playing cards.

Calvin’s success in Geneva made the city a powerful center of Protestantism. Following Calvin’s lead, missionaries trained in Geneva were sent to all parts of Europe. Calvinism became established in France, the Netherlands, Scotland, and central and eastern Europe.

By the mid-sixteenth century, Calvinism had replaced Lutheranism as the most important and dynamic form of Protestantism. Calvin’s Geneva stood as the fortress of the Protestant Reformation. John Knox, the Calvinist reformer of Scotland, called it “the most perfect school of Christ on earth.”