

World History

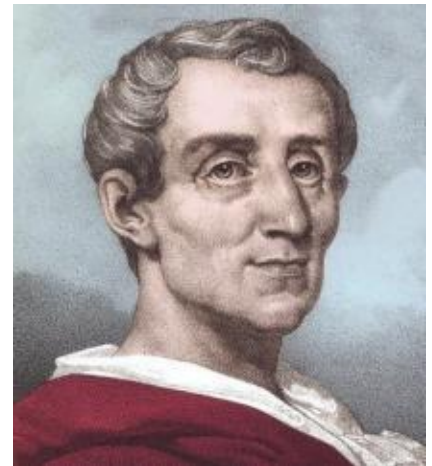
Thinkers of the Enlightenment Readings

Name:

Section:

Secondary Source: Baron de Montesquieu (1689-1755)

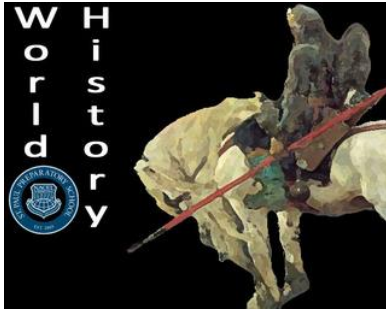
Charles Louis de Secondat was born in Bordeaux, France, in 1689 to a wealthy family. Despite his family's wealth, de Secondat was placed in the care of a poor family during his childhood. He later went to college and studied science and history, eventually becoming a lawyer in the local government. De Secondat's father died in 1713 and he was placed under the care of his uncle, Baron de Montesquieu. The Baron died in 1716 and left de Secondat his fortune, his office as president of the Bordeaux Parliament, and his title of Baron de Montesquieu. Later he was a member of the Bordeaux and French Academies of Science and studied the laws and customs and governments of the countries of Europe. He gained fame in 1721 with his *Persian Letters*, which criticized the lifestyle and liberties of the wealthy French as well as the church. However, Montesquieu's book *On the Spirit of Laws*, published in 1748, was his most famous work. It outlined his ideas on how government would best work.



Montesquieu believed that all things were made up of rules or laws that never changed. He set out to study these laws scientifically with the hope that knowledge of the laws of government would reduce the problems of society and improve human life. According to Montesquieu, there were three types of government: a monarchy (ruled by a king or queen), a republic (ruled by an elected leader), and a despotism (ruled by a dictator). Montesquieu believed that a government that was elected by the people was the best form of government. He did, however, believe that the success of a democracy - a government in which the people have the power - depended upon maintaining the right balance of power.

Montesquieu argued that the best government would be one in which power was balanced among three groups of officials. He thought England - which divided power between the king (who enforced laws), Parliament (which made laws), and the judges of the English courts (who interpreted laws) - was a good model of this. Montesquieu called the idea of dividing government power into three branches the "separation of powers." He thought it most important to create separate branches of government with equal but different powers. That way, the government would avoid placing too much power with one individual or group of individuals. He wrote, "When the [law making] and [law enforcement] powers are united in the same person... there can be no liberty." According to Montesquieu, each branch of government could limit the power of the other two branches. Therefore, no branch of the government could threaten the freedom of the people. His ideas about separation of powers became the basis for the United States Constitution.

Despite Montesquieu's belief in the principles of a democracy, he did not feel that all people were equal. Montesquieu approved of slavery. He also thought that women were weaker than men and that they had to obey the commands of their husband. However, he also felt that women did have the ability to govern. *"It is against reason and against nature for women to be mistresses in the house... but not for them to govern an empire. In the first case, their weak state does not permit them to be preeminent; in the second, their very weakness gives them more gentleness and moderation, which, rather than the harsh and ferocious virtues, can make for a good environment."* In this way, Montesquieu argued that women were too weak to be in control at home, but that their calmness and gentleness would be helpful qualities in making decisions in government.



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Secondary Source: BBC History Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

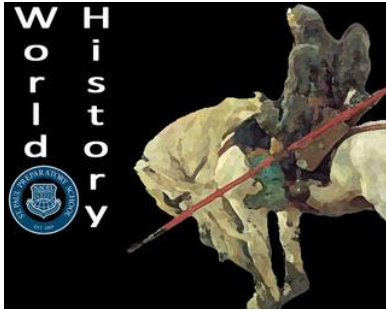
Jean-Jacques Rousseau was born in Geneva on 28 June 1712. His mother died when he was young, and Rousseau was initially brought up by his father, a watchmaker. He left Geneva aged 16 and travelled around France, where he met his benefactress, the Baronnesse de Warens, who gave him the education that turned him into a philosopher.



Rousseau reached Paris in 1742 and soon met Denis Diderot, another provincial man seeking literary fame. They formed the core of the intellectual group, the 'Philosophes'. Eschewing an easy life as a popular composer, in 1750 he published his first important work 'A Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts' (1750). Its central theme was that man had become corrupted by society and civilisation. In 1755, he published 'Discourse on the Origin of Inequality'. He claimed that original man, while solitary, was happy, good and free. The vices dated from the formation of societies, which brought comparisons and, with that, pride. He was very much opposed to the general progress as society since it only corrupted man in his point of view. 'The Social Contract' of 1762 suggested how man might recover his freedom in the future. It argued that a state based on a genuine social contract would give men real freedom in exchange for their obedience to a self-imposed law. Rousseau described his civil society as united by a general will, furthering the common interest while occasionally clashing with personal interest. Rousseau believed that only through a direct democracy could the general will of the people truly be expressed, and so government should be based off of that model.

Increasingly unhappy in Paris, Rousseau travelled to Montmorency. While at Montmorency he produced his book 'Émile a treatise on education.' This novel escaped the censors and was the most widely read of all his works. In it Rousseau discusses his ideas of educational reform and the need to match education to the stages of development of the individual instead of the other way around. He was a champion of the Empiricism movement that stressed the importance of education through having personal experiences. Its freedom with emotion was in tune with developing romanticism and won him many important fans. But it scandalised the French authorities, who burned it and ordered Rousseau's arrest. He travelled to England, a guest of the Scottish philosopher David Hume, but grew unhappy and secretly returned to France.

In his last 10 years, Rousseau wrote his 'Confessions', justifying himself against his opponents. He died on 2 July 1778 in Ermenonville, the estate of the Marquis de Girardin, who had given him refuge.



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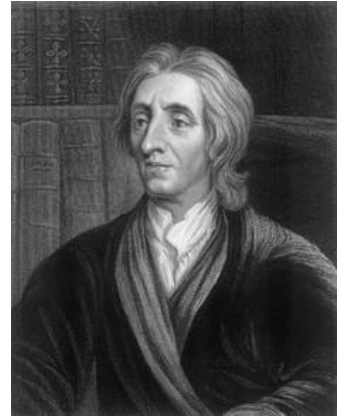
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Secondary Source: John Locke (1632-1704)

Born in Wrington, Somerset, England Locke was very much influenced by the revolutions already happening around him, as opposed his later counter-parts in France who could only dream of such things. In his time Locke was especially known for his liberal, anti-authoritarian theory of the state, his empirical theory of knowledge, his advocacy of religious toleration, and his theory of personal identity.

Locke was famous for arguing that the divine right of kings is supported neither by scripture nor by the use of reason. In developing his theory of our duty to obey the state, he attacked the idea that might makes right: Starting from an initial state of nature with no government, police or private property, we humans could discover by careful reasoning that there are natural laws which suggest that we have natural rights to our own persons and to our own labor. It was through this understanding of human nature that Locke was able to come up with the principle that men are naturally good, and naturally entitled to life, liberty, and property.



Locke's *Two Treatises of Civil Government* were published after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 which brought William of Orange and Mary to the throne, but they were written in the throes of the Whig revolutionary plots against Charles II in the early 1680s. In this work Locke gives us a theory of natural law and natural rights which he uses to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate civil governments, and to argue for the legitimacy of revolt against tyrannical governments. In his political treatises he argues in favor of a social contract by which governments get their power from the people, and it is a governments' responsibility to protect the natural rights of the people. At any point in the government fails to uphold these natural rights then the people have the capability to remove the government and install a government that will.

Locke wrote on a variety of other topics among the most important of these is religious toleration. Henry VIII had created a Church of England when he broke with Rome. This Church was the official religion of England. Catholics and dissenting Protestants, e.g Quakers, Unitarians and so forth, were subject to legal prosecution. During much of the Restoration period there was debate, negotiation and maneuvering to include dissenting Protestants within the Church of England. In a "Letter Concerning Toleration" and several defenses of that letter Locke argues for a separation between church and state. His reasoning behind this separation is that governments and religions control separate spheres, as since religion is an individual's personal choice it should not be up to a government to decide or otherwise influence, a persons' decisions on religion.

"Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy." *Locke, John* . Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, n.d. Web. 03 Mar. 2014.