The Enlightenment

The Age of Reason – 18th century
Scientific Revolution to Political Revolutions

The Scientific Revolution: Mid-1500s

- Thinkers and scientists using *reason* and *logic* towards traditional thinking and questioning the world around them.
- *Copernicus: Heliocentric Theory*
- *Galileo: Telescope*
- *Newton: Physics and Science*

New Question: “Can the ideas and concepts of the Scientific Revolution be applied to the government, leaders, economics, religion, etc.?”

The Enlightenment: Mid 1600s – mid-1700s

- Thinkers and philosophers begin to use reason and logic to question ideas on politics, such as governments, leaders, religions, etc.
- *John Locke*
- *Jean Jacques Rousseau*
- *Voltaire*

Concept: The ideas and thinking that questioned the physical world are now applied to the natural and political world.

Political Revolutions: Late-1700s

- The ideas and concepts of the Enlightenment will influence the rise of political revolutions:
  - American Revolution
  - French Revolution
  - Haitian Revolution
  - Russian Revolution
  - Mexican Revolution
Scientific Revolution leads to Enlightenment

- The Scientific Revolution: European scientists using reason and logic to discover laws of nature.
  - Chemistry, astronomy, physics, etc.

- Early 1700s: The same concept used during the scientific revolution is being applied to political understanding.
  - If people used reason to find laws that governed the physical world, why not use reason to discover natural laws?
Eight Enlightenment Philosophers

New Views on Government

- Thomas Hobbes
- John Locke
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau
- Baron de Montesquieu

New Views on Society

- Voltaire
- Denis Diderot
- Mary Wollstonecraft
- Adam Smith
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| Thomas Hobbes | 1588-1679 England *Leviathan* | • Human Nature was negative.  
• In nature, people were cruel, greedy, and selfish. They would fight rob, and oppress one another.  
• Life without laws and controls would be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” | • **Social contract**: give up their freedom in return for the safety and order of an organized society.  
• A powerful gov’t, like an absolute monarchy, was best for society. Impose order, obedience, and suppress rebellion.  
• Absolute power in a government. |
| John Locke | 1632-1704 England *Two Treaties on Government* | • Believed in **natural laws and rights**.  
• We are born with rights because they are a part of nature and existence – they come from god.  
• At birth, people have the right to life, liberty, and property. | • Rulers/gov’t have an obligation & responsibility to protect the nature of the people  
• If the gov’t fails, the people have a right to overthrow that gov’t  
• The best gov’t is one which is accepted by all the people and has limited power |
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<td>Baron de Montesquieu</td>
<td>1689-1755 France</td>
<td>• Laws and Social institutions are created by humans who are subjected to ignorance and error.</td>
<td>• Strongly opposed absolute monarchy and was a voice for democracy.</td>
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<td><em>The Spirit of the Laws</em></td>
<td>• Tyranny can be avoided by sharing political power among a diversity of classes and groups.</td>
<td>• <strong>Separation of powers:</strong> best way to protect liberties is to divide gov’t into 3 branches</td>
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<td>• <strong>Checks and Balances:</strong> each branch should check (limit) the other two branches</td>
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<td>Jean-Jacques Rousseau</td>
<td>1712-1778 France</td>
<td>• People are inherently good, but become corrupted by society.</td>
<td>• Questioned authority – specifically absolute monarchies and religion</td>
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<td><em>The Social Contract</em></td>
<td>• <strong>Social contract</strong> was the path to freedom: people should do what is best for their community</td>
<td>• Hated political and economic oppression</td>
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<td>• The <strong>general will</strong> of the people should direct the state toward the common good.</td>
<td>• The government is a contract between the people and its’ rulers.</td>
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<td>• If that contract is not obeyed, the people may break it (rebel)</td>
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| Cesare Beccaria | 1738-1794 Italy *Crimes and Punishments* | • Believed people who were accused of a crime should have a fair trial  
• Right to a speedy and fair trial.  
• Punishment for the crime should be the same for everyone. | • Government should work to prevent crime rather than focus on punishment.  
• Rewarding good behavior was more effective than punishing bad.  
• Education would reduce the crime rate. |
| Voltaire     | 1694-1778 France *Candide* | • Advocated freedom of thought, speech, politics, & religion  
• Fought against intolerance, injustice, inequality, & ignorance  
• Wanted individualism and people being equal and being born of equal worth. | • Though he wanted everyone to be free and equal, he believed a gov’t would never succeed.  
• He believed a gov’t should have a monarch king, and everyone would be equal under the ruler. |
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| Mary Wollstonecraft | 1759-1797 England A Vindication of the Rights of Women | • Women had not been included as “free and equal.”  
• Advocated for women’s rights and for women to participate in gov’t and politics. | • Believed in equal education and rights for girls and boys.  
• Believed that monarchies and power influences greed and corruption. |
| Adam Smith       | 1723-1790 England The Wealth of Nations | • Advocated *laissez faire* or “free to do”  
• Like natural laws in gov’t, Smith believed in natural laws of economics.  
• Businesses should not be interrupted by gov’t interference | • The gov’t had a duty to protect society and to provide justice and public works.  
• Free market should drive the economy.  
• All nations and economies will thrive if economies were free of regulation and markets could compete freely. |