

# The Enlightenment

The Age of Reason – 18<sup>th</sup> century

# Scientific Revolution to Political Revolutions

**The Scientific Revolution:**  
Mid-1500s

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

1600s

Thinkers and philosophers begin to use reason and logic to question ideas on politics, such as governments, leaders, religions, etc.

*John Locke*  
*Jean Jacque 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

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

Philosopher	Biography	Philosophical Ideas	Beliefs in Government
Thomas Hobbes	1588-1679 England <i>Leviathan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human Nature was negative.</li> <li>• In nature, people were cruel, greedy, and selfish. They would fight rob, and oppress one another.</li> <li>• Life without laws and controls would be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Social contract:</b> give up their freedom in return for the safety and order of an organized society.</li> <li>• A powerful gov’t, like an absolute monarchy, was best for society. Impose order, obedience, and suppress rebellion.</li> <li>• Absolute power in a government.</li> </ul>
John Locke	1632-1704 England <i>Two Treaties on Government</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believed in <b>natural laws and rights.</b></li> <li>• We are born with rights because they are a part of nature and existence – they come from god.</li> <li>• At birth, people have the right to life, liberty, and property.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rulers/gov’t have an obligation &amp; responsibility to protect the nature of the people</li> <li>• If the gov’t fails, the people have a right to overthrow that gov’t</li> <li>• The best gov’t is one which is accepted by all the people and has limited power</li> </ul>

Philosopher	Biography	Philosophical Ideas	Beliefs in Government
Baron de Montesquieu	1689-1755 France <i>The Spirit of the Laws</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Laws and Social institutions are created by humans who are subjected to ignorance and error.</li> <li>Tyranny can be avoided by sharing political power among a diversity of classes and groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strongly opposed absolute monarchy and was a voice for democracy.</li> <li><b>Separation of powers:</b> best way to protect liberties is to divide gov't into 3 branches</li> <li><b>Checks and Balances:</b> each branch should check (limit) the other two branches</li> </ul>
Jean-Jacques Rousseau	1712-1778 France <i>The Social Contract</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People are inherently good, but become corrupted by society.</li> <li><b>Social contract</b> was the path to freedom: people should do what is best for their community</li> <li>The <b>general will</b> of the people should direct the state toward the common good.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questioned authority – specifically absolute monarchies and religion</li> <li>Hated political and economic oppression</li> <li>The government is a contract between the people and its' rulers.</li> <li>If that contract is not obeyed, the people may break it (rebel)</li> </ul>

Philosopher	Biography	Philosophical Ideas	Beliefs in Government
Cesare Beccaria	1738-1794 Italy <i>Crimes and Punishments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believed people who were accused of a crime should have a fair trial</li> <li>• Right to a speedy and fair trial.</li> <li>• Punishment for the crime should be the same for everyone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government should work to prevent crime rather than focus on punishment.</li> <li>• Rewarding good behavior was more effective than punishing bad.</li> <li>• Education would reduce the crime rate.</li> </ul>
Voltaire	1694-1778 France <i>Candide</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocated freedom of thought, speech, politics, &amp; religion</li> <li>• Fought against intolerance, injustice, inequality, &amp; ignorance</li> <li>• Wanted individualism and people being equal and being born of equal worth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Though he wanted everyone to be free and equal, he believed a gov't would never succeed.</li> <li>• He believed a gov't should have a monarch king, and everyone would be equal under the ruler.</li> </ul>

Philosopher	Biography	Philosophical Ideas	Beliefs in Government
Mary Wollstonecraft	1759-1797 England <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Women</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women had not been included as “free and equal.”</li> <li>• Advocated for women’s rights and for women to participate in gov’t and politics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believed in equal education and rights for girls and boys.</li> <li>• Believed that monarchies and power influences greed and corruption.</li> </ul>
Adam Smith	1723-1790 England <i>The Wealth of Nations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocated <b>laissez faire</b> or “free to do”</li> <li>• Like natural laws in gov’t, Smith believed in natural laws of economics.</li> <li>• Businesses should not be interrupted by gov’t interference</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The gov’t had a duty to protect society and to provide justice and public works.</li> <li>• Free market should drive the economy.</li> <li>• All nations and economies will thrive if economies were free of regulation and markets could compete freely.</li> </ul>