

## Enlightenment Thinkers and their Contributions

### British

Isaac Newton: Laws of Gravity, Action/Reaction and Calculus

Thomas Hobbes: Government must control human nature

John Locke: Human Nature is to be reasonable

Adam Smith: Rules of Economic systems

Thomas Jefferson: Government must respect natural rights

Mary Wollstonecraft: Demands rights for women

### French Philosophes

Montesquieu: Balance power in government to insure justice

Voltaire: Common sense, religious tolerance, freedom of thought

Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Man is born free and everywhere is in chains

Denis Diderot: Encyclopedia: Knowledge frees people from prejudice.

### **John Locke: Two Treatises on Government**

1. Whether we consider natural reason, which tells us that men, being once born, have a right to their preservation, and consequently to meat and drink and such other things as Nature affords for their subsistence, or “revelation,”; which gives us an account of those grants God made of the world to Adam, and to Noah and his sons, it is very clear that God, as King David says, “has given the earth to the children of men,” given it to mankind in common.”
2. “But, this being supposed, it seems to some a very great difficulty how anyone should ever come to have a property in anything.”
3. “The earth and all that is therein is given to men for the support and comfort of their being. And though all the fruits it naturally produces, and beasts it feeds, belong to mankind in common ... there must of necessity be a means to appropriate them some way or other before they can be of any use, or at all beneficial, to any particular men.”
4. “Though the earth and all inferior creatures be common to all men, yet every man has a “property” in his own “person.” This nobody has any right to but himself. The “labour” of his body and the “work” of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever, then, he removes out of the state that Nature hath provided and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with it, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property.”

### **Montesquieu: The Spirit Of The Laws**

1. “In every government there are three sorts of power: the legislative; the executive in respect to things dependent on the law of nations; and the [judicial] in regard to matters that depend on the civil law.”
2. “The political liberty of the subject is a tranquility of mind arising from the opinion each person has of his safety. In order to have this liberty, it is requisite that the government be so constituted that one man need not be afraid of another.”
3. “When the legislative and executive powers are untied in the same person, or in the same body of magistrates, there can be no liberty, because apprehensions may arise lest the same monarch or senate should enact tyrannical laws, to execute them in a tyrannical manner.”
4. “Again there is no liberty if the judiciary power be not separated from the legislative and executive. Were it joined with the legislative, the life and liberty of the subject would be exposed to arbitrary control; for the judge would be then the legislator. Were it joined to the executive power, the judge might behave with violence and oppression.”
5. “There would be an end of everything, were the same man or the same body, whether of the nobles or often people, to exercise these three powers: that of enacting laws, that of executing the public resolutions and of trying the causes of individuals.”



### **Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen**

The French people, convinced that forgetfulness of and contempt for the natural rights of man are the sole causes of the misfortunes of the world, have resolved to set forth these sacred and inalienable rights in a solemn declaration, in order that all citizens, being able constantly to compare the acts of the government with the aim of every social institution, may never permit themselves to be oppressed and degraded by tyranny, in order that the people may always have before their eyes the bases of their liberty and their happiness, the magistrate the guide to his duties, the legislator the object of his mission.

Accordingly, in the presence of the Supreme Being, they proclaim the following declaration of the rights of man and citizen.

1. The aim of society is the general welfare. Government is instituted to guarantee man the enjoyment of his natural and inalienable rights.
2. These rights are equality, liberty, security, and property.
3. All men are equal by nature and before the law.

### **Natural Economic Laws**

In 1776, Scottish philosopher Adam Smith introduced the idea that a market economy is a self-regulating machine whose rules are unchangeable scientific laws rooted in the nature of human behavior. In the United States, the idea that the role of government is to support these natural laws was succinctly expressed in a 1925 speech by President Calvin Coolidge, who believed that "The business of America is business." These ideas reenter public discussion whenever politicians and economists argue against government efforts to rectify economic imbalances in favor of letting the economic mechanism work out its own irregularities. Students should consider whether economic development in the United States and the world economy is the result of natural law or a series of business, government, and individual decisions that can be altered to produce different results, including a cleaner environment and a more equitable distribution of wealth.

### **Limited "Natural Rights" for Women**

The Enlightenment slogan "free and equal" did not apply to women. Women did have "natural rights," said the philosophers. But unlike the natural rights of men, these rights were limited to the areas of home and family. Mary Wollstonecraft was the best known of the British female critics. She accepted that a woman's first duty was to be a good mother. At the same time, however, she felt that a woman should be able to decide what is in her own interest and should not be completely dependent on her husband. Only education, she argued, could give women the tools they needed to participate equally with men in public life.

### **Selections from the Declaration of Independence:**

1. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
2. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.
3. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it.