

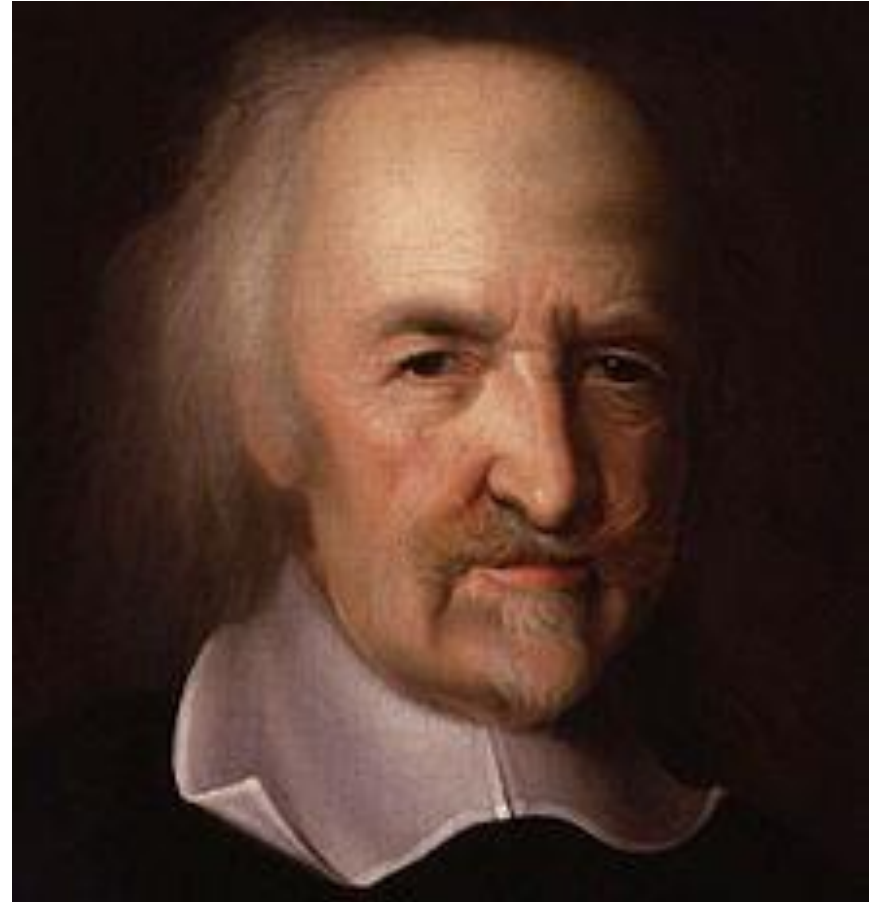


NEW IDEAS

Philosophical Influences

THOMAS HOBBES (1588 – 1679)

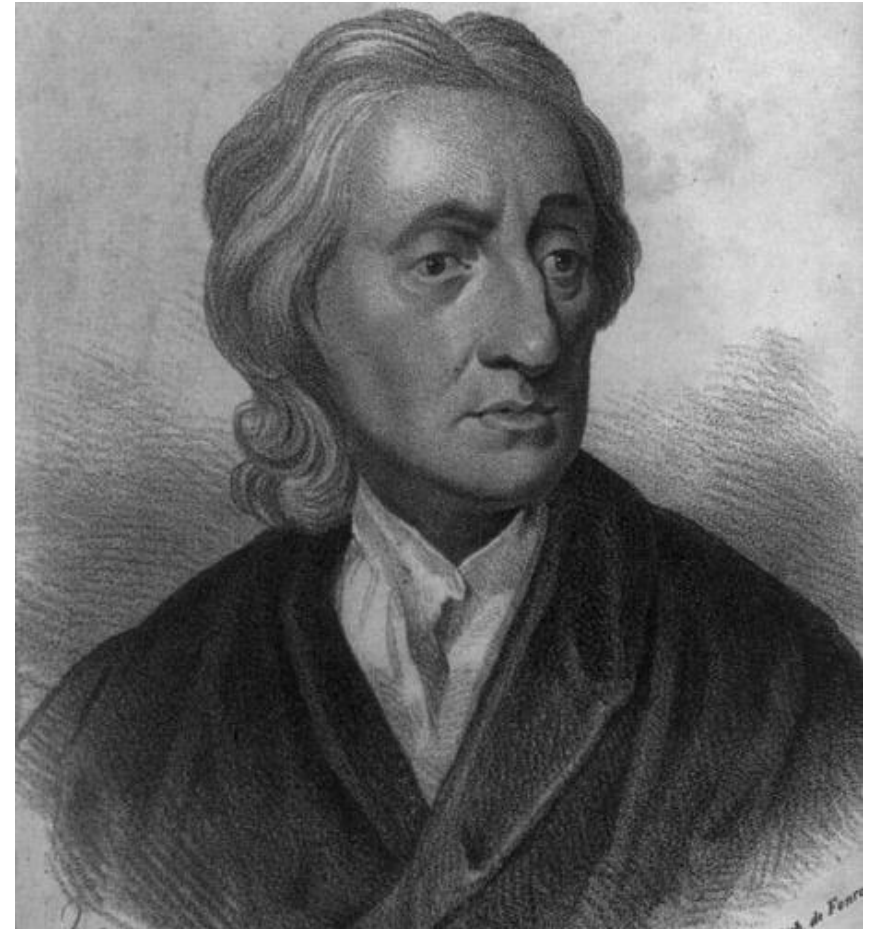
- Believes in absolutism but also believed in rights and equality.
- Hobbes wrote in his masterwork, the *Leviathan* (1651), that men were motivated primarily by the desire for power and by fear of other men, and so needed an all powerful sovereign to rule over them.
- People were motivated by two things: fear of death, greed.



- Hobbes felt cooperation between people is impossible in the absence of trust, and that trust will be lacking where there is no superior power to enforce the law.
- We need political authority because it gives us the security that allows us to trust other people, leading to cooperation.
- Governments are created to protect us from our own selfishness.

JOHN LOCKE (1632 – 1704)

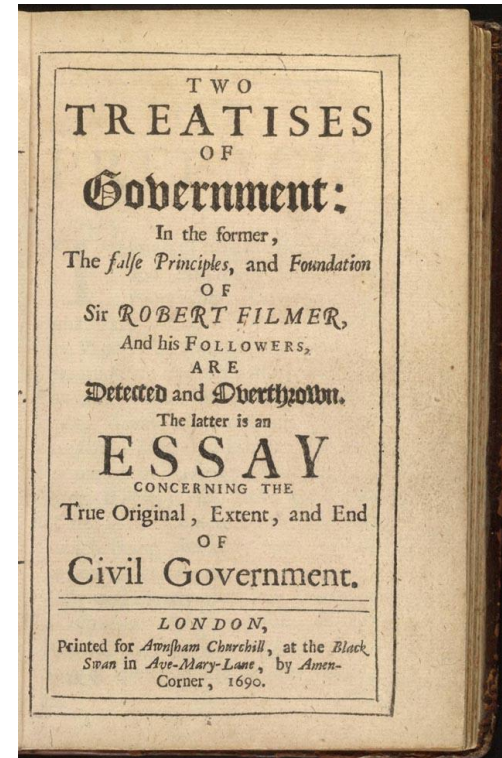
- He was the “Father of Liberalism”
- John Locke was a philosopher who believed that people needed a system of government and laws to protect them from what he called “living in a state of nature.”
- A state of nature means that people live naturally, with no laws or government to guide their decisions or tell them what to do. Sounds great right?



○ In his *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), he outlined a theory of politics based on people's natural rights: life, liberty, and the ownership of property.

○ Most famous for developing the idea of the **Social Contract**:

- Crown had a duty to defend the rights of ALL of their subjects equally
- In return for protection and rights, subjects would agree to be ruled by the Crown and government
- If the Crown broke the contract, the people had the right to revolt and get a new leader



- Locke believed there needed to be a system of government for the purpose of protecting three basic rights. He called this system a “social contract” because it was a contract agreed upon by the people in order to protect their rights.
- He championed the rights of the individual and condemned religious intolerance.



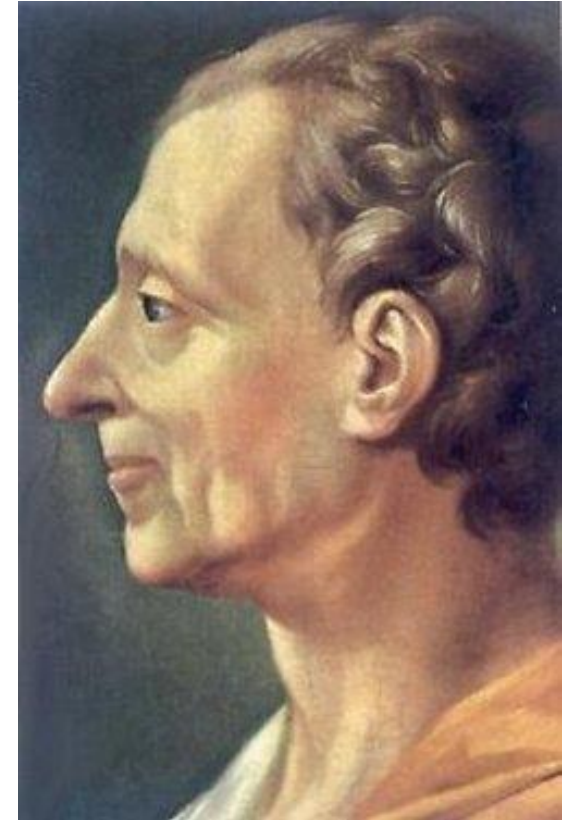
By agreeing to a reasonable system of rules for everyone to follow, inequalities be avoided and people gain protection of their rights. In other words, the main purpose of a social contract is to protect the average citizens.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Do you think living in a state of nature would really be dangerous and challenging?
- And what about the need for a social contract?
- Do you think people need to agree to a set of rules in order to protect their most basic rights?
- Finally, what rights do you think are the most important? Do you agree that life, liberty and the right to own property should be a basis for our Constitution? Why?

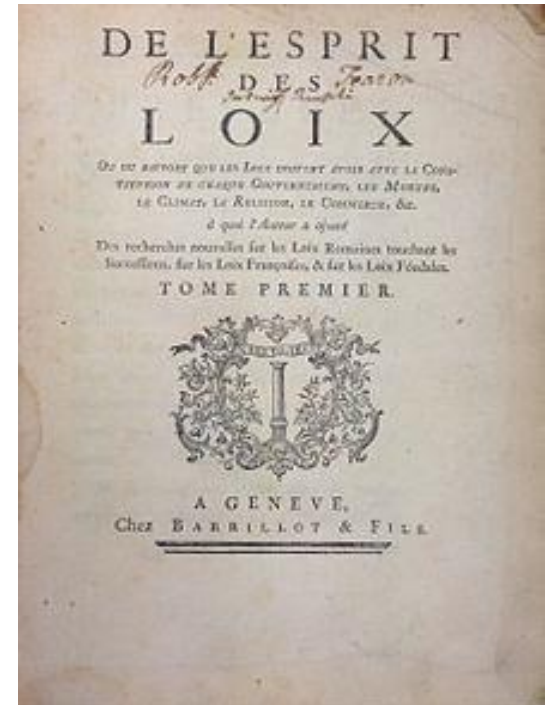
BARON DE MONTESQUIEU (1689 – 1755)

- He claimed there was no ideal form of government and that it should be adapted based on the population and social maturity of its citizens.
- He believed the **French monarchy was** too powerful and **corrupt** as a result.
- He feared democracy – he did not believe the masses could govern themselves properly.



○ In his masterwork *The Spirit of the Laws*, published in 1748, he developed the notion that human, natural and divine laws guide all things, including forms of government, and can best be discovered by empirical investigation.

○ He believed that England was the freest country because they divided power between the Crown, Parliament & Courts. This Separation of Powers meant: a King who enforced laws, an elected Parliament who made the laws and a Judiciary(courts) who interpreted the laws.



VOLTAIRE (1694 – 1778)

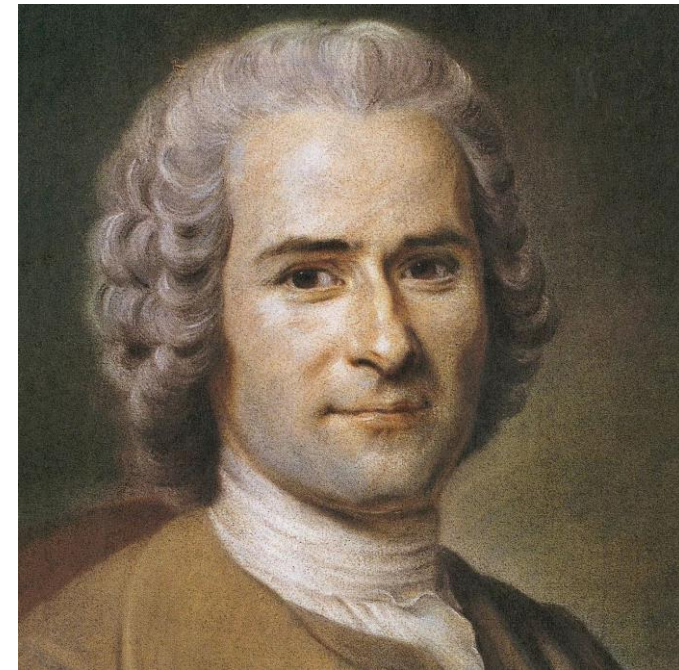
- His given name was Francois-Marie Arouet.
- Regularly in trouble with the Law as he often attacked govt. for corruption and tyranny.
- Exiled to England where he learned to love Freedom of Speech. In England he found a model of religious and philosophical freedom, which greatly affected the course of his work, culminating with the publication of his Philosophical Letters Concerning the English Nation in 1733, in which he praised the customs and institutions of English life.



- Voltaire was most influential and popular among the elites – many traveled to England to meet with him.
- He feared democracy and the rule of the masses. He felt that only an enlightened monarch could bring about change...with the help from philosophers like himself.
- He felt that a society that embraced religious diversity was essential to success and prosperity.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU (1712 – 1778)

- He came from a poor family but worked hard to become a government minister.
- When injured on the job while in office he learned that he was not allowed to sue so he felt justice was not possible for anyone.
- Became very critical of government and society and championed the rights of the common person.



- Rousseau stated that “Man is born free, yet everywhere he is in chains.” He believed that prisons and taxes are tools to keep the weak from power.
- He wrote his own version of the Social Contract where he laid out his idea for how govt should be run.
- He felt that political power was man-made and rejected the Divine Right of Kings and therefore the entire system of govt in France was wrong.

○ People are naturally good, but society is evil and makes individuals evil.

○ Government should be the servant of the people – not their masters. He believed in government of the people, by the people, for the people.

○ Rousseau's ideas were chiefly responsible for inspiring the French Revolution.

QUESTIONS

1. What would people from war-torn countries today say about the kind of govt that is best for society?
2. What is necessary for democracy to work well?
3. How should societies make important decisions? Can 'the masses' be trusted to make decisions for the good of society?
4. Is there an ideal form of govt? What would it look like? What would it include and exclude? How would decisions be made? What stands in the way of this ideal governing body?