

Enlightenment Thinkers Handout



ENLIGHTENMENT THINKERS

Name, Country & Title of work	Views on Life & Human Nature	Views on Government & Economy	Impact of Philosopher
Thomas Hobbes (England) <i>Leviathan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are naturally cruel, greedy, & selfish • People need control and a <u>social contract</u> - agreement to give up the state of nature for an organized society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need a powerful gov'n't to control people or they would fight, rob, & oppress one another • Yes to absolute monarchy • Gov'n't control of economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society needs some form of government
John Locke (England) <i>Two Treatises of Government</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are basically reasonable and moral • People have <u>natural rights</u> – rights that belong to all humans at birth (life, liberty, property) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gov'n't formed to protect natural rights • Best gov'n't form has limited power and is accepted by all citizens • Rejected monarchy and sided w/ Parliament • People have the right to overthrow the gov'n't if it fails it's obligations or violates people's natural rights - Supports revolution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas on Natural right – life, liberty, property was a fundamental influence on the US Declaration of Independence
The Baron de Montesquieu (France) <i>On the Spirit of the Laws</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • power needs to be balanced so that individuals do not abuse power (people are greedy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Republican form of gov'n't is BEST (supports limited or no monarchy) • Division of power into 3 branches (Executive, Legislative, Judiciary) to protect liberty • There needs to be a system of checks and balances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • France, US, & Latin American nations all used separation of powers in new constitutions
Voltaire (France) - various-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrote about the abuses against humanity (inequality, injustice, superstition) • Detested the slave trade • Believed in religious freedom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted corrupt officials & idle aristocrats • He offended the gov'n't and church • Defended freedom of speech "<i>I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.</i>" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas on freedom of thought and expression were Guaranteed in US Bill of Rights and French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen • Freedom of religion guaranteed in US Bill of Rights and French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen • Ideas influenced European monarchs to reduce or eliminate censorship and religious persecution
Cesare Bonesana Beccaria (Italy) <i>On Crimes and Punishments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People should be treated fairly (no torture for criminals) • No capital punishment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laws exist to preserve social order, not to avenge crimes • Governments should seek the greatest good for the greatest number of people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas on the abolishment of torture influenced torture to be outlawed or reduced in nations of Europe and the Americas • Abolishment of torture guaranteed in the US Constitution
Jean-Jacques Rousseau (France) <i>The Social Contract</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people are basically good but become corrupted by evils of society (esp. unequal distribution of property) • committed to individual freedom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some control set by a freely formed gov'n't-are good • in consenting to form a gov'n't, people give up self-interest in favor of the common good • surrender rights to retain freedom • favors good of whole over the individual • freedom is obedience to the law • He had a hatred of the political and economic oppression of the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idea that all people should be treated equal influenced US Declaration of Independence • Ideas inspired leaders of the French Revolution
Mary Wollstonecraft (England) <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woman's first duty is to be a good mother • Woman should decide what is in own best interest and not be completely dependent on husband 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • called for equal education to ensure equal participation in public life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • influenced Women's Rights movements

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