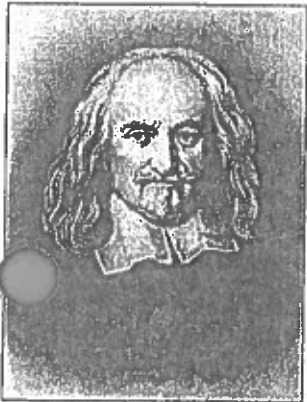


Enlightenment

John Locke (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke/>)

Among Locke's political works he is most famous for *The Second Treatise of Government* in which he argues that sovereignty resides in the people and explains the nature of legitimate government in terms of natural rights and the social contract. He is also famous for calling for the separation of Church and State in his *Letter Concerning Toleration*. Much of Locke's work is characterized by opposition to authoritarianism. This is apparent both on the level of the individual person and on the level of institutions such as government and church. For the individual, Locke wants each of us to use reason to search after truth rather than simply accept the opinion of authorities or be subject to superstition. He wants us to proportion assent to propositions to the evidence for them. On the level of institutions it becomes important to distinguish the legitimate from the illegitimate functions of institutions and to make the corresponding distinction for the uses of force by these institutions. Locke will argue that we have a right to the means to survive. When Locke comes to explain how government comes into being, he uses the idea that people agree that their condition in the state of nature is unsatisfactory, and so agree to transfer some of their rights to a central government, while retaining others. This is the theory of the social contract. There are many versions of natural rights theory and the social contract in seventeenth and eighteenth century European political philosophy, some conservative and some radical. Locke's version belongs on the radical side of the spectrum. These radical natural right theories influenced the ideologies of the American and French revolutions



Thomas Hobbes (<http://www.trincoll.edu/depts/phil/philo/phils/hobbes.html>)

Hobbes developed a materialist and highly pessimistic philosophy that was denounced in his own day and later, but has had a continuing influence on Western political thought. His *Leviathan* (1651) presents a bleak picture of human beings in the state of nature, where life is "nasty, brutish, and short." Fear of violent death is the principal motive that causes people to create a state by contracting to surrender their natural rights and to submit to the absolute authority of a sovereign. Although the power of the sovereign derived originally from the people, Hobbes said-challenging the doctrine of the divine right of kings-the sovereign's power is absolute and not subject to review by either subjects or ecclesiastical powers. Hobbes's concept of the social contract led to investigations by other political theorists, notably Locke, Spinoza, and Rousseau, who formulated their own radically different theories of the social contract.

Voltaire (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/voltaire/#VolPhilcoEnPhi177>)

Central to this complex is Voltaire's conception of liberty. Around this category, Voltaire's social activism and his relatively rare excursions into systematic philosophy also converged. In 1734, in the wake of the scandals triggered by the *Lettres philosophiques*, Voltaire wrote, but left unfinished at Cirey, a *Traité de métaphysique* that explored the question of human freedom in philosophical terms. The question was particularly central to European philosophical discussions at the time, and Voltaire's work explicitly referenced thinkers like Hobbes and Leibniz while wrestling with the questions of materialism, determinism, and providential purpose that were then central to the writings of the so-called deists.



Voltaire held a stance somewhere between the strict determinism of rationalist materialists and the transcendent spiritualism and voluntarism of contemporary Christian natural theologians. For Voltaire, humans are not deterministic machines of matter and motion, and free will thus exists. But humans are also natural beings governed by inexorable natural laws, and his ethics anchored right action in a self that possessed the natural light of reason immanently. This stance distanced him from more radical deists like Toland, and he reinforced this position by also adopting an elitist understanding of the role of religion in society. For Voltaire, those equipped to understand their own reason could find the proper course of free action themselves. But since many were incapable of such self-knowledge and self-control, religion, he claimed, was a necessary guarantor of social order.

One often sees Voltaire defending less a carefully reasoned position on a complex philosophical problem than adopting a political position designed to assert his conviction that liberty of speech, no matter what the topic, is sacred and cannot be violated. Voltaire never actually said "I disagree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." Yet the persistence of the myth that associates this dictum with his name attests to the way that this invented statement captures well the spirit of his philosophy of liberty.



Montesquieu (http://www.hyperhistory.com/online_n2/people_n2/persons6_n2/montesquieu.html)
 Montesquieu's full title was Baron de la Brede et de Montesquieu. He was a jurist, social philosopher and satirist and became the first great French man associated with the Enlightenment.

He was born near Bordeaux. Educated at Bordeaux, he became an advocate, but turned to scientific research and literary work. He settled in Paris (1726), then spent some years travelling and studying political and social institutions.

Montesquieu's best-known work is 'De l'esprit des lois' (The Spirit of Laws). He felt that tyranny resulted when all powers were controlled by one man.

He believed political freedom could be created by separating political powers into different branches, and he developed the political theory of 'checks and balances' that became an important part of the American Constitution.

Rousseau (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rousseau/#RepGov>)

At the center of Rousseau's view in *The Social Contract* is his rejection of the Hobbesian idea that a people's legislative will can be vested in some group or individual that then acts with their authority but rules over them. Instead, he takes the view that to hand over one's general right of ruling oneself to another person or body constitutes a form of slavery, and that to recognize such an authority would amount to an abdication of moral agency. This hostility to the representation of sovereignty also extends to the election of representatives to sovereign assemblies, even where those representatives are subject to periodic re-election. Even in that case, the assembly would be legislating on a range of topics on which citizens have not deliberated. Laws passed by such assemblies would therefore bind citizens in terms that they have not themselves agreed upon. Not only does representation of sovereignty constitute, for Rousseau, a surrender of moral agency, but the widespread desire to be represented in the business of self-rule is a symptom of moral decline and the loss of virtue.



The practical difficulties of direct self-rule by the entire citizen body are obvious. Such arrangements are potentially onerous and must severely limit the size of legitimate states. Rousseau argues that in order for the general will to be truly general it must come from all and apply to all. This thought has both substantive and formal aspects. Formally, Rousseau argues that the law must be general in application and universal in scope. The law cannot name particular individuals and it must apply to everyone within the state. Rousseau believed to protect political freedom a political one aimed at constructing political institutions that allow for the co-existence of free and equal citizens in a community where they themselves are sovereign.

Directions: On a sheet of paper complete the following:

1. Define Enlightenment.
2. Read about the five philosophers. For each one, sum up their thoughts using the phrases below (each philosopher will receive three).
3. Describe the impact of the Enlightenment on two colonial figures (hint: use textbook!).

Humanity's worst enemies were intolerance, prejudice and superstition.	Leaders should not have titles of nobility since everyone is equal.	All humans are selfish and naturally wicked.	People give up their rights to a strong ruler.	A direct democracy is the best government.
A social contract is an agreement among free individuals to create a society and government.	People are born with the natural rights of life, liberty and property.	People have a right to overthrow a government that fails to protect their rights.	People have the natural ability to govern their own affairs.	Reduction or elimination of censorship.
Autocracy is the best government.	Division of government power into three branches (separation of powers).	The power of each branch of government should be checked (checks and balances).	Three branches of government should be executive, legislative and judicial.	He fought for tolerance, reason, freedom of religious belief and speech.