JOHN LOCKE: 1632-1704

EARLY LIFE:
Locke was born in England. His father fought in the English Civil War on the Parliament side. His father’s views about the people’s role in government influenced Locke’s views.

BELIEFS:
Locke believed that all people were born good and were given natural rights by God. These natural rights are rights to life, liberty, and owning property. Locke believed that the king’s power should be limited by laws enacted by the people. This type of government is called a constitutional monarchy.

He argued that the agreement between the government and the people was a social contract. The people in a society agree to give up part of their freedom to a government in exchange for protection of their natural rights. However, John Locke argued that if the government did not uphold its part and protect the people’s rights, the people should revolt!
EARLY LIFE:
He was born in France. His uncle died in 1714 and left Montesquieu his riches and his title. He became a lawyer and was famous as a writer who criticized the French king and the Catholic Church. His most famous book was *The Spirit of the Laws*. It explained how the government should be organized.

BELIEFS:
He agreed with Locke in many ways about the role of government. Montesquieu admired the system in England that limited the power of the king. He said the government should be broken into different sections and that each should have some power to control the others. He wanted government to split into three branches. One branch would make laws (legislative branch), another would interpret the laws (judicial branch), and the third would enforce the laws (executive branch). This system is called separation of powers and became the model for the United States’ government.

One of the most important ideas from his system is that each branch has some control over another branch. For example, the legislature makes laws, but the head of state (president) enforces them. Montesquieu believed this system would prevent a leader from becoming a tyrant, or dictator. This is the idea of checks and balances in government.
JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU: 1712-1778

EARLY LIFE:
He was born in Geneva, Switzerland. His mother died when he was born, so he was raised by an aunt. When Rousseau turned 13, he worked as an apprentice for an engraver, but ran away after three years. He became a secretary for a wealthy woman, who subsequently had much influence on his life. He moved to Paris where he became a music teacher.

BELIEFS:
Rousseau wrote *The Social Contract*. In it, he wrote that “man is born free, yet everywhere he is found in chains.” Rousseau was referring to the large number of people living under oppressive governments in Europe. He believed that individuals should have certain rights. Rousseau felt that whatever the majority of the people wanted should become law. He was against the absolute power of control of the Church and government and he believed that the government should do what the majority of the people wanted. This is the idea of popular sovereignty. He also argued that if people were in control, then the rules should be strictly enforced. Rousseau’s ideas of individual freedom and popular sovereignty spread throughout Europe and some British colonies in North America.
EARLY LIFE:
Voltaire was born in Paris, France. He began to make friends with wealthy aristocrats in Paris. He became a writer because of his ability to make sarcastic jokes. He was sent to prison for eleven months because he made a political cartoon of one of the French government leaders. He continued to ridicule [make fun of] political leaders and was thrown in prison a second time. In order to get out of prison, he had to promise to leave France, so he went to England.

BELIEFS:
Voltaire is often described as generous, enthusiastic, sentimental, and often distrustful. He felt that all things must be explained logically and reasonably. He fought against intolerance, tyranny, and superstition. He believed in freedom of thought and respect for all individuals. Most importantly, he believed that religion was too powerful and defended individuals who suffered because of their beliefs. Therefore, Voltaire believed in freedom of religion. Furthermore, he argued that there should separation of church and state. In other words, government and religion should not influence one another.

He also defended the freedom of speech. He famously said, “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.”
CESARE BECCARIA: 1738-1794

EARLY LIFE:
Cesare Beccaria was born in Milan, Italy. He studied the writers of the eighteenth-century French Enlightenment, especially the works of Baron de Montesquieu.

BELIEFS:
Beccaria believed that people who were accused of a crime should have rights. He did not like the death penalty and believed torture was wrong. He believed that education would reduce the crime rate. The right to a fair and speedy trial was one of his ideas. He also believed that the punishment should be the same for everyone who commits the same crime. His ideas led to changes in European and American criminal laws.
EARLY LIFE:
Smith was born in a small village in Scotland. He was raised by his widowed mother and left home for school at the age of 14. He went on to attend school at Oxford University.

BELIEFS:
Smith was a philosopher who focused on the role of economics. In his book, *The Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776, he argued that self-interest guides the most efficient use of resources. With this book, Smith became the first philosopher to focus on the role economics played within society. His beliefs of “free enterprise” set a new standard.

Smith believed that someone working to earn money not only benefited himself, but also benefitted society as a whole. When people are free to make economic choices on their own without government interference, both the buyer and the seller receive things each wants.

He argued that invisible forces of supply and demand for goods naturally determined the amount of goods available and the prices for which those goods are sold. This is the idea of a free market economy. Many economists believe this to be a type of capitalism. He rejected the idea of mercantilism.