

The following are primary source documents written by philosophers during the Enlightenment. The documents were taken from various sources.

John Locke:

"Men being...by nature all free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of his estate and subjected to the political power of another without his own consent."

People are responsible for government: "...Political power is that power, which every man having in the state of nature, has given up into the hands of the society...that the society has set forth over itself...that it shall be employed for their good...When lawmakers, driven by ambition, fear, folly, or corruption, try to gain or give someone else absolute power over the lives, liberties, and property of the people, they misuse the power which the people have put into their hands. It is then the privilege of the people to establish a new legislature to provide for their safety and security. These principles also hold true for the executive, who helps to make and carry them out..."

Voltaire:

"I do not agree with a word you say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it."

Thomas Hobbes:

People are naturally evil: Human nature was based on the assumption that men were naturally wild, selfish, driven by passionate appetites, and prone to violence. This leads to constant conflict, "...every man against every man" Men associate out of sheer necessity in order to protect each other from others...They give up their personal liberties to avoid "the war of all against all". Therefore, the only way to protect people against other people is to "...erect a common power...to confer all their power and strength upon one man, or assembly..."

Baron de Montesquieu

"When the [law making] and [law enforcement] powers are united in the same person...there can be no liberty."

"Power ought to serve as a check to power."

Government should be divided: "...In every government, there are three sorts of power: the legislative (to make laws), the executive (to carry out the laws), and the judiciary (to interpret the laws)...There would be an end of everything, were the same man or the same body, whether of the nobles or of the people, to exercise these three powers: that of enacting laws, that of executing (carry out) the public resolutions (decisions), and of trying the case of individuals..."

Jean Jacques Rousseau:

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"Society's institutions, like government, schools, the arts, and the media, corrupt naturally good individuals."

People are born with natural rights: "...In the beginning of history, people were free. Then people joined together in a common community for their mutual protection. Each person accepted an informal "contract" or agreement in which he placed himself under "the supreme direction of the general will of all." In time, many people interpreted the term to mean that each person owed obedience to the will of the community even if his own personal will or desires differed from the community, or general, will...No one – not even a king- had the right to go against the will of the community as a whole. If a ruler was tyrannical and ignored the will of the people, the social contract was broken and the people had the right to demand their freedom..."

Mary Wollstonecraft:

"Men and women must be educated, in a great degree, by the opinions and manners of the society they live in."

"Strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there will be an end to blind obedience."

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