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Liberalism: Origin and Growth

For BA Part-III (Hons.)

Political Science (Optional paper)

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Classical Liberalism

- Stresses the importance of human rationality
- Classical Liberalism is an ideology that embraces the principles of individualism.
 - Rule of Law
 - Rights and Freedoms
 - Private Property
 - Economic freedom
 - Self-interest
 - Competition
- Classical liberalism means the original ideals or liberalism
- Liberty essentially means ‘freedom’, therefore liberalism is an ideology based on freedom

In other words

- “A market order based on private property is thus seen as an embodiment of freedom... Unless people are free to make contracts and to sell their labour, or unless they are free to save their incomes and then invest them as they see fit, or unless they are free to run enterprises when they have obtained the capital, they are not really free.”

(Gaus and Courland “Liberalism”, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2008))

- Classical liberalism values political freedom and a free market economy that has limited government intervention within the economy.
- Modern liberalism is different because it advocates a greater role for the state in society.



Modern Liberalism:

- *Proposes government regulations with in the economy.
- *Separation between church and state.

Classical liberalism

- *Proposes less government involvement with the economy.
- *Awareness of individualism.
- *Growth of Secularism.
- *Humanism

Who are the humanist?

- A group of thinkers who emerged in the late 14th century (Italy and France)
- Someone who believes in the supremacy of reason of individuals over faith (truth based on deduction and logic)
- Believed in the importance of arts and literature as celebrations of human accomplishment rather than faith
- Questioned authority, teachings, and practices of the Catholic Church

Development of Classical Liberalism

- The following events help shape classical liberalism:
 - Renaissance
 - Enlightenment/Age of Reason
 - Humanist
 - Protestant Reformation
 - American Revolution: 1776
 - French Revolution: 1789
 - Industrial Revolution: 18th -19th Centuries
 - The power of the market
 - Individual reward for individual initiative
 - Freedom to pursue personal wealth
 - Individual responsibility for success or failure
 - Progress, inventiveness, innovation, efficiency

- 1400-1600 **The Renaissance**
 - Awareness of individualism grew
- 1517- **The Protestant Reformation**
 - Growing secularism
- 1700's- **The Enlightenment/Age of Reason**
 - Democratic values were strengthened
- 1750-1850- **Industrial Revolution**
 - Economic freedom grew along with individual values.
- 1776- **American Revolution**
- 1789- **French Revolution**

- 1900's- **Liberalism**

Renaissance

- The Renaissance fostered the belief of individualism in society
- The Reformation built on the ideas of the Renaissance by transforming the Christian faith through the importance of reason.
- Ultimately both of these events fueled the Enlightenment or the Age of Reason, and as a result Classical Liberalism was born.
- Within the Enlightenment a group of Italian and French philosophers called Humanists, emerged.
 - Humanist developed an interpretation of history, structure of society and life based on reason and logic opposed to religion.

Protestant Reformation

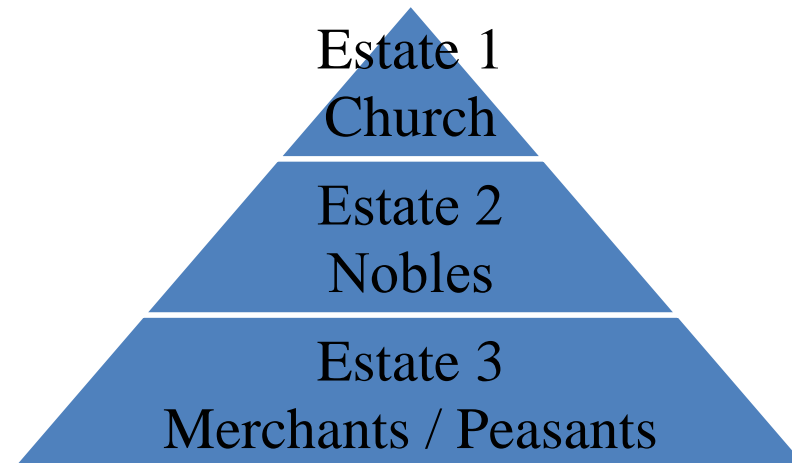
- The Reformation dramatically altered the political, economic and social circumstance of Europe by opposing the Catholic Church.
 - It also challenged the hierarchical concentration of religious power and any corruption of this power at this time.
 - Many high priests at the time asked peasant for donations in order to ensure their acceptance into heaven. Ex Notre Dame

Enlightenment

- The Enlightenment was a time period of great political and economic change which was proposed by thinkers and philosophers of the era.

REMEMBER:

European society at the time was divided into 3 classes or estates



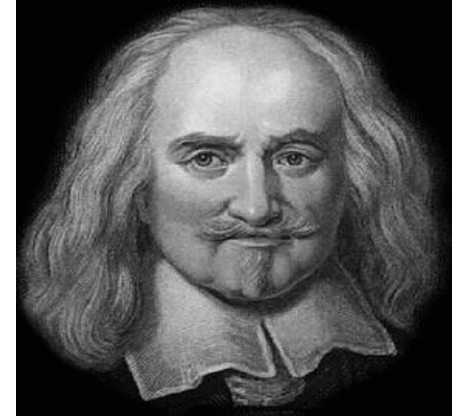
- At this time Kings ruled by Divine Right and the economy was organized by the feudal system.
- With the ideas of the Enlightenment came the breakdown of the feudal economic order, since people became more involved in oversea trade, urbanization grew and a wealthy middle class emerged. (industrial Revolution)
- At the same time there was political struggles for a less authoritarian rule which challenged the status quo.

- As a result Classical liberalism emerged which was a political and economic philosophy that encouraged:
 - The primacy of individual rights and freedoms
 - The belief that humans are reasonable and can make rational decisions that will benefit both themselves and society as a whole
 - Economic freedom, involving the ownership of private property and free markets (markets with limited government intervention)
 - The protection of civil liberties
 - Constitutional limitations on the government

Liberal Thinkers

- The following thinkers of the time contributed to the ideology of liberalism:
 - Thomas Hobbes
 - John Locke
 - *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*
 - Charles de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu
 - Adam Smith
 - John Stuart Mills

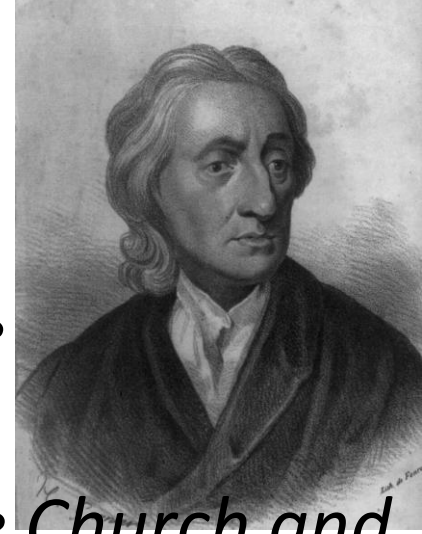
Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)



- *An English Philosopher*
- *He believed human nature is characterized by fear, violence, and dangerous self-interest (extreme individualism)*
- *He believed that if everyone is free, then everyone is in danger; that security is more important than freedom*
- *He did not think it was possible to have both security and freedom*
- *Individuals must give up their sovereignty in exchange for security.*

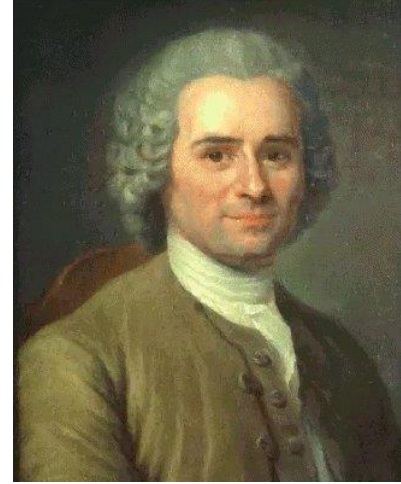
John Locke (1632-1704)

- Also an English philosopher*
- Unlike Hobbes, Locke believed humans are rational, intelligent, and reasonable.*
- Locke opposed the authoritarianism of the Church and the state and believed that individuals had the right to use their reason and logic to make their own decisions.*
- He also believed the source of power was the people themselves.*
- He believed that any government action had to be justified by popular consent (democracy).*
- However he believed in the social contract where people must give up some of their rights to a government for social security.*



Jean-Jacques Rousseau

(1712-1778)



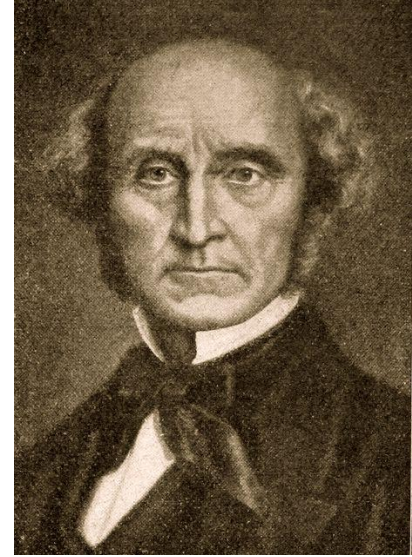
- *Swiss Philosopher*
- *Believed people are inherently good but have been corrupted by society and civilization*
- *Believed men are naturally free and equal*
- *Wanted humans to go back to these natural, good characteristics*
- *He believed the will of the people was the absolute authority but, unlike Locke, did not believe in representative democracy, but in a direct democracy*
- *He believed citizens should make the laws directly*

Charles de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu (1689-1755)

- French Enlightenment thinker whose writings were banned by the Catholic church
- Montesquieu believed in the worth of the individual, the equality of individuals, and the accountability of the government.
- He also believed strongly in the separation of powers in government (executive, legislative, and judicial).
- Within this system of **Checks and Balances** each branch would be both separate from and dependent on one another so that no one branch became too powerful.
- However in order for this system to work people needed to be involved in government-a democracy.

John Stuart Mill

(1806-1873)



- English philosopher
- He was interested in the protection of individual freedom and the promotion of individual decision making as the core of societal institutions
- He believed that the only limitations that should be placed on the individual were those that would protect others (i.e. The only restrictions on people should be those that prevent harm to others)
- Mill also strongly advocated free speech

Pillars of Liberalism

