

Thomas Hobbes

1588 -1679 was an English philosopher, remembered today for his work on political philosophy. His 1651 book *Leviathan* established the foundation for most of Western political philosophy from the perspective of social contract theory. During his life he experienced a bloody civil war

In this book, he details the idea of the social contract which states that men originally formed governments because of their need for protection. In exchange for their safety, the people gave up their rights to the rulers including the right to revolt.

Believed people were naturally wicked and could not be trusted to govern.

Believed that an absolute monarchy - a government that gave all power to a king or queen - was best.

Believed governments were created to protect people from their own selfishness and evil.

Any abuses of power by this authority are to be accepted as the price of peace.

Believed democracy - allowing citizens to vote for government leaders - would never work.

Believed that a diverse group of representatives presenting the problems of the common person would, hopefully, prevent a king from being cruel and unfair.

John Locke

John Locke was a famous English philosopher during the period of European History known as enlightenment. He lived from 1632 to 1704. He had written a book called *Two Treatises of Civil Government* (1690).

Believed that everyone had a right to life, liberty, and property. These rights were called natural rights. (Sometimes these are now called basic rights or fundamental rights.) The idea of natural rights means that all persons have these rights just because they are human beings. Everyone is born with these rights and they should not be taken away.

Believed people receive these rights from God. Others believed that people have them just because it is natural for people to have them.

Believed that the main purpose of government should be to protect the people's natural rights. He also said that kings should not have absolute power. They should not be able to deprive (take away) people of their natural rights.

Although people agreed on certain natural rights, they worried about how those rights could be protected. Locke and others thought about what life would be like in a situation where there was no government and no laws. They called this situation a state of nature. They were afraid that in a state of nature their rights would be taken away.

Locke argued that people should agree with one another to give up some of their freedom in exchange for protection and security. They should consent to follow some laws in exchange for the protection that these laws would give them. This agreement is called a social compact or social contract. A social compact is an agreement people make among themselves to create a government to rule them and protect their natural rights. In this agreement the people consent to obey the laws created by that government.