

Differing Views of the Role of Government

Notes for each:

Name/Nationality:

What's the problem?

What should government do?

Examples in current government:

Thomas Hobbes (English, 1588-1679):

During the time men live **without a common power to keep them all in awe**, they are in that conditions called war; and such a war, as if of every man, against every man.

To this war of every man against every man, this also in consequent; that nothing can be unjust. The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice have there no place. Where there is no common power, there is no law, where no law, no injustice. Force, and fraud, are in war the cardinal virtues.

No arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death: and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.

John Locke (English, 1632-1704):

If man in the state of Nature be so free as has been said, if he be absolute lord of his own person and possessions, equal to the greatest and subject to nobody, why will he part with his freedom, this empire, and subject himself to the dominion and control of any other power? To which it is obvious to answer, that though in the state of Nature he hath such a right, yet the enjoyment of it is very uncertain and constantly exposed to the invasion of others; for all being kings as much as he, every man his equal, and the greater part no strict observers of equity and justice, the enjoyment of the property he has in this state is very unsafe, very insecure. This makes him willing to quit this condition which, however free, is full of fears and

continual dangers; and it is not without reason that he seeks out and is willing to join in society with others who are already united, or have a mind to unite **for the mutual preservation of their lives, liberties and estates, which I call by the general name--property.**

The great and chief end, therefore, of men uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the preservation of their property; to which in the state of Nature there are many things wanting.

Thomas Jefferson (American, 1743-1826):

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with inherent and inalienable rights; that among these, are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that **to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men**, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

James Madison (American, 1751-1836):

The civil government ... functions with complete success ... by the total separation of the Church from the State.

I must admit moreover that it may not be easy, in every possible case, to trace the line of separation between the rights of religion and the Civil authority with such distinctness as to avoid collisions and doubts on unessential points. The tendency of a usurpation on one side or the other, or to a corrupting coalition or alliance between them, will be best guarded by an entire abstinence of the Government from interference in any way whatever, beyond the necessity of **preserving public order, and protecting each sect against trespass on its legal rights by others.**

Wherever the real power in a Government lies, there is the danger of oppression. In our Governments, the real power lies in the majority of the Community, and the invasion of private rights is chiefly to be apprehended, not from the acts of Government contrary to the sense of its constituents, but from acts

in which the Government is the mere instrument of the major number of the constituents.

Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels (German, 1818-1883; 1820-1895)

The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of **class struggles**.

Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.

This organization of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party, is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves. But it ever rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier.