

with which it was associated could, within an effective framework of institutions and customs, produce a political society that was every bit as conducive to security, liberty, and the commodious life as was a republican form of government. In the manner of Locke, Defoe, and Mandeville, he thereby substituted self-interest for civic virtue as the prevailing principle of modern mixed governments. To Montesquieu, the mixed monarchy of the highly commercial polity of Great Britain seemed to be the prime example validating that perception.

Although Montesquieu's equations of civic virtue with republics and republics with small territories significantly influenced public debate in the United States from 1776 through the adoption of the Federal Constitution, his concept of the separation of powers—in his view, the essential element underlying the comparative success of the British constitution in preserving liberty among British citizens—was both his most important contribution to modern political theory and the idea that most interested American political leaders of that era. Practically all earlier writers had conceived of a balanced constitution or mixed government in terms of a division of authority among the several constituent estates within the realm—the one, the few, and the many. By contrast, Montesquieu modified this tradition by defining the concept of the separation of powers in modern functional terms, according to the ostensibly discrete and separable roles of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. A strict separation of powers among these three branches, he believed, was necessary for any well-regulated polity that hoped to preserve intact the public liberty of its citizens. For, he argued, only if each branch of government was wholly independent of the others was it possible to maintain a government of laws and to prevent the degeneration of the government into despotism. Although the authors of the early state constitutions between 1776 and 1780 had little success in applying Montesquieu's doctrine, it continued throughout the Revolutionary era to be a goal for most American political leaders, especially for the framers of the Federal Constitution of 1787, which represented the most ambitious effort up to that time to put Montesquieu's concept into practice.

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The Scottish Moral and Historical Tradition

THE REMARKABLE display of intellectual virtuosity known as the Scottish Enlightenment is usually said to have begun with the work of Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746), professor of moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow. In a series of influential works, including *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue** (London, 1725), *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections** (London, 1728), *Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy* (Glasgow, 1747), and *A System of Moral Philosophy** (London, 1755), Hutcheson developed the main principles of the Scottish moral philosophy. His work at once incorporated ideas from the civic humanist tradition, especially from the works of the ancients and James Harrington; the natural rights theories of Grotius, Pufendorf, and Locke, with whom he shared the concepts of the social contract and the right of resistance against tyrants; and the moral philosophy of Locke's pupil, Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713), whose *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions and Times** (London, 1711) had denied the Hobbesian and Lockean contention that men were autonomous in the state of nature. But Hutcheson's moral philosophy represented a significant departure from all these earlier writers.

Building on Shaftesbury, Hutcheson challenged both Locke's epistemology and his concept of the state of nature. Contrary to Locke and more in accord with Grotius and Pufendorf, Hutcheson argued that man's perceptions of good and evil, of right and wrong conduct, were the products not of reason but of what he called the moral sense, an innate extra sense implanted in every man by God. Defining moral actions as those that contributed to the public good,