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**Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu** 18 January 1689, La Brède, Gironde – 10 February 1755), was a French social commentator and political thinker who lived during the Era of the Enlightenment. He is famous for his articulation of the theory of separation of powers, taken for granted in modern discussions of government and implemented in many constitutions throughout the world. He was largely responsible for the popularization of the terms feudalism and Byzantine Empire.

Montesquieu is credited amongst the precursors of anthropology, including Herodotus and Tacitus, to be among the first to extend comparative methods of classification to the political forms in human societies. Indeed, the French political anthropologist Georges Balandier considered Montesquieu to be "the initiator of a scientific enterprise that for a time performed the role of cultural and social anthropology". According to social anthropologist D.F. Pocock, Montesquieu's 'Spirit of the Laws' "is the first consistent attempt to survey the varieties of human society, to classify and compare them and, within society, to study the inter-functioning of institutions". Montesquieu's political anthropology gave rise to his theories on government.

Montesquieu's most influential work divided French society into three classes (or trias politica, a term he coined): the monarchy, the aristocracy, and the commons. Montesquieu saw two types of governmental power existing: the sovereign and the administrative. The administrative powers were the executive, the legislative, and the judicial. These should be separate from and dependent upon each other so that the influence of any one power would not be able to exceed that of the other two, either singly or in combination. This was radical because it completely eliminated the three Estates structure of the French Monarchy: the clergy, the aristocracy, and the people at large represented by the Estates-General, thereby erasing the last vestige of a feudalistic structure.

Likewise, there were three main forms of government, each supported by a social "principle": monarchies (free governments headed by a hereditary figure, e.g. king, queen, emperor), which rely on the principle of honor; republics (free governments headed by popularly elected leaders), which rely on the principle of virtue; and despotisms (enslaved governments headed by dictators), which rely on fear. The free governments are dependent on fragile constitutional arrangements. Montesquieu devotes four chapters of The Spirit of the Laws to a discussion of England, a contemporary free government, where liberty was sustained by a balance of powers. Montesquieu worried that in France the intermediate powers (i.e., the nobility) which moderated the power of the prince were being eroded.

Montesquieu’s legacy can be found is most modern liberal democracies: Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



