

The Cambridge Companion to Montesquieu

Montesquieu was among the most influential writers of the eighteenth century, and the study of his thought enriches and complicates our understanding of the Enlightenment. Following renewed interest in his writings over the last three decades, the *Cambridge Companion to Montesquieu* brings together the variety of disciplinary and interpretive approaches that have shaped the scholarship on his work and legacy. This *Companion* offers an integrated volume on Montesquieu as philosopher, novelist, historian, economic thinker, political scientist, and political theorist. It introduces readers to key themes and ongoing debates, reflects developments in the field, breaks fresh ground, indicates avenues for future research, and provides multiple perspectives on the relevance of Montesquieu's thought to contemporary problems in political theory.

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The Cambridge Companion to Montesquieu

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Chronology

- 1689 Born at La Brède, near Bordeaux.
- 1700–05 Receives his formal education at the Collège de Juilly, near Paris.
- 1705–08 Studies law in Bordeaux, where he receives a Bachelor of Law degree from the University of Bordeaux.
- 1709–14 Resides in Paris.
- 1713 Returns to Bordeaux following the death of his father (November 15).
- 1714 Becomes a counselor in the Parlement of Bordeaux.
- 1715 Marries Jeanne de Lartigue, a Protestant. Composes *Memorandum on the Debts of State*.
- 1716 Birth of his son, Jean-Baptiste de Secondat (February 10). Upon the death of his uncle, he becomes *président à mortier* of the Parlement of Bordeaux (April 24). Elected to the Academy of Bordeaux (April 3). Reads his *Dissertation on the Policy of the Romans Regarding Religion* to the Academy (June 18).
- 1717 Birth of his daughter Marie de Montesquieu (January 22). Drafts his *Discourse on Cicero*. Begins work on *Persian Letters*.
- 1718 Serves first term as Director of the Academy of Bordeaux.
- 1721 Publication of *Persian Letters* in Holland.
- 1724 Writes *Dialogue between Sulla and Eucrates* and *Letters from Xenocrates to Pheres*.
- 1725 Publication of *The Temple of Gnidus* in Holland.

- 1725 Reads portions of *Treatise on Duties* and *Discourse on the Motives That Ought to Encourage Us to Undertake the Sciences* to the Academy of Bordeaux.
- 1726 Sells his parliamentary office (July 7).
- 1727 Birth of his daughter Denise de Montesquieu (January 22).
Composes *Considerations on the Wealth of Spain*.
- 1728 Elected to the French Academy.
- 1728–31 Extensive travels in Austria, Hungary, Italy, Germany, Holland, and England. Arrives in Amsterdam, October 15, 1729. Arrives in London, November 3, 1729. Becomes a member of the Royal Society of London and a Freemason.
- 1731–33 Returns to La Brède. Composes *Reflections on the Character of Certain Princes*, *Reflections on Universal Monarchy*, and *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and on their Decline*.
- 1734 Publication of *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and Their Decline* in Holland.
- 1736–38 Montesquieu composes *Essay on the Causes that Can Affect Minds and Characters*.
- 1748 Publication of *The Spirit of the Laws* in Geneva.
- 1749 Censure of *The Spirit of Laws* in Jansenist journal, *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* (October 9 and 16).
- 1750 Publication of *Defense of the Spirit of the Laws* (February).
- 1751 *The Spirit of Laws* placed on Papal Index (November 29).
Montesquieu completes *Lysimachus*, begun in 1731.
- 1752 Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris drafts but does not publish a censure of *The Spirit of the Laws*.
- 1752–54 Montesquieu drafts *Responses and Explanations Given to the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris*.
- 1754 Montesquieu composes *Memorandum on the Silence to Impose on the Constitution*.
- 1753–55 Montesquieu composes *Essay on Taste* for Diderot's *Encyclopédie*.
- 1755 Montesquieu dies in Paris (February 10).

Abbreviations

We have used abbreviations for frequently cited primary texts. Unless otherwise noted, references appear in the text as follows:

Individual Major Works

- CR Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu,
*Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans
 and Their Decline*, ed. David Lowenthal (Indianapolis, IN:
 Hackett Publishing, 1999), cited by chapter number.
- EL Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu,
L'esprit des lois in *Oeuvres complètes de Montesquieu*, ed.
 Roger Caillois (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1949–51),
 cited by book and chapter number.
- MT Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, *My Thoughts*,
 ed. Henry C. Clark (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2012),
 cited by entry number.
- PL Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, *Persian
 Letters*, ed. Andrew Kahn (Oxford: Oxford University Press,
 2008), cited by letter number.
- SL Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of
 the Laws*, ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia C. Miller, and Harold
 S. Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), cited
 by book and chapter number.
- SL-N Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu,
The Spirit of the Laws, trans. Thomas Nugent (London: Nourse
 and Vaillant, 1750), cited by book and chapter number.

Collected Works

- Nagel Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, *Oeuvres complètes de Montesquieu*, ed. André Masson (Paris: Les Éditions Nagel, 1950–5), cited by volume and page number.
- OC Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, *Oeuvres complètes de Montesquieu*, ed. Jean Ehrard, Catherine Volpilhac-Augier, et al. (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1998–2008; Lyon and Paris: ENS Éditions and Classiques Garnier, 2010–), cited by volume and page number.
- Pléiade Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, *Oeuvres complètes de Montesquieu*, ed. Roger Caillois (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1949–51), cited by volume and page number.