This chapter discusses the origins and meaning of the separation of powers doctrine. It highlights the contribution of French nobleman and parliamentary magistrate Charles Louis de Secondat, otherwise known as Baron de Montesquieu, to political theory: *L'Esprit des Lois (The Spirit of the Laws).* The chapter also addresses the question of whether there is a separation of powers in the UK constitution. Differences of opinion between academics and judges as to the importance of the separation of powers doctrine to an understanding of the UK constitution are reviewed. Examples of overlap between the three functions of government are presented, and the reforms made by the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 are discussed.
2. Separation of powers

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