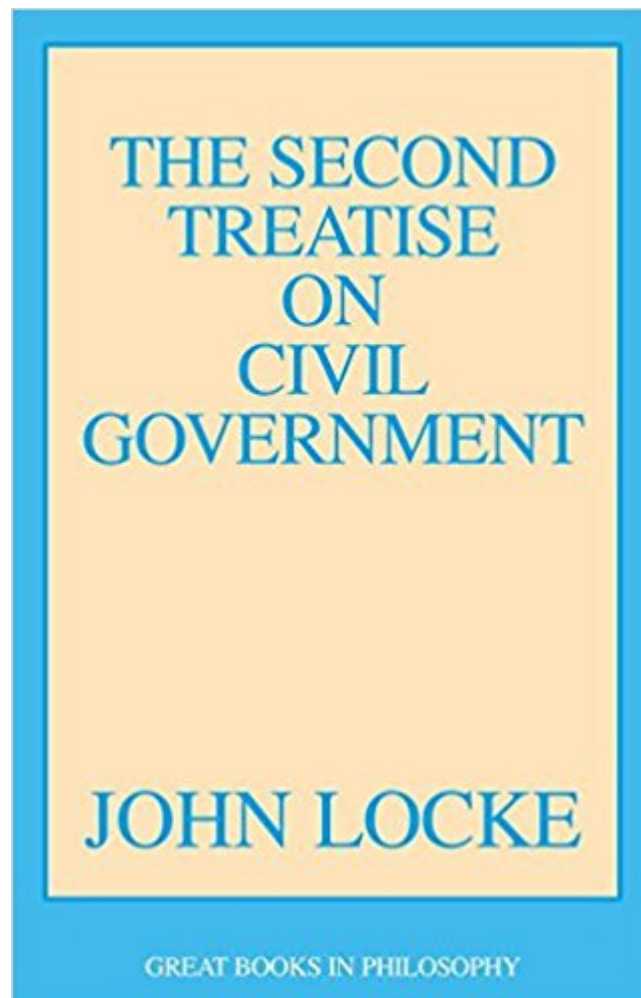




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# The Second Treatise On Civil Government (Great Books In Philosophy)



## Synopsis

As one of the early Enlightenment philosophers in England, John Locke sought to bring reason and critical intelligence to the discussion of the origins of civil society. Endeavoring to reconstruct the nature and purpose of government, a social contract theory is proposed. The Second Treatise sets forth a detailed discussion of how civil society came to be and the nature of its inception. Locke's discussion of tacit consent, separation of powers, and the right of citizens to revolt against repressive governments, has made The Second Treatise one of the most influential essays in the history of political philosophy.

## Book Information

Series: Great Books in Philosophy

Paperback: 132 pages

Publisher: Prometheus Books; Great Books in Philosophy edition (March 1, 1986)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0879753374

ISBN-13: 978-0879753375

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.2 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 13 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #174,149 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #164 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Social Philosophy](#) #342 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Ideologies & Doctrines > Democracy](#) #544 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Political](#)

## Customer Reviews

JOHN LOCKE was born August 29, 1632, in Somerset, England, the son of landed English gentry. He entered Christ Church College of Oxford University in 1652 and passed through the academic ranks quite uneventfully, later assuming a teaching post at the university. To escape ordination in the Church of England, he took a natural bureaucratic step toward university promotion. Locke took up the study of medicine and was transported into a new world of "natural philosophy" in which he associated with powerful scientific minds like that of Robert Boyle. It was through his concern for the authority of the state in religious matters and the Natural Law used to support it that Locke became interested in the role of Natural Law in experience. A curiosity that led him to philosophy, and more particularly to epistemology, as

an avocation. Add to his interest in Natural Law the sociopolitical climate of seventeenth-century England – steeped in violent civil war, counter-revolution, restoration, deposition of the monarchy and the subsequent Parliamentary rule, and the eventual restoration of the monarchy late in the century – along with an intellectual stage dominated by the authoritarianism of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*, and one can begin to sense the pressures at work on Locke. After accepting a brief diplomatic mission to Madrid in 1665, Locke retreated to his teaching and medical experiments. His real political education was to come quite by accident as a result of an association with the first Earl of Shaftesbury, a wealthy and extremely powerful figure who had survived the vicissitudes of England's political turbulence. Initially employed as the Earl's medical advisor, Locke later became a permanent member of the household. It was here under the skillful tutelage of Shaftesbury that Locke matured as a social philosopher. The political intrigues in which the Earl was engaged caused Locke to be exiled, though he later returned to England after the Glorious Revolution that saw William and Mary placed on the English throne in 1688. Locke's famous *Two Treatises of Government*, of which the second is most widely read, are an outgrowth of his original political proclivities, the sociopolitical chaos plaguing England during his lifetime, and his association with the Earl of Shaftesbury. Locke's dedication to individual liberty, government by consent, the social contract, and the right to revolt against governments that endanger the rights of citizens, has made him one of the most important political thinkers of the past four centuries. His legacy will live on as long as there are people fighting for freedom. He died in Oates, England, on October 28, 1704. Some of John Locke's major works include: *A Letter for Toleration* (1689), *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1693), *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), and *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695).

Happy to learn about the careful hands. Careful Spoiler ahead. Only in the first couple of chapters but my tutor told me what happens in the end of the book, The blank slate! Thanks! Great read and recommend to anyone studying Political Science.

This work by John Locke should be read in its entirety. Too often the condensed descriptions of this book make Mr. Locke to seem rather naive. First there is the natural state of humanity before the formation of civil government. Locke does not really try to propound this period or situation as a utopia. He admits that in the natural state there would be strife. Instead what Locke does is formulate how rational beings would exist in a state of nature without a governing authority. In essence Locke formulates commonly consented rules by humans living in proximity. Thus Locke

prefigures Frederick Hayek's order without design (see "Law, Legislation and Liberty, Volume 1: Rules and Order. Locke believed in a God of Reason and demonstrated how reason is the basic means humans can live together in absence of governing authority. Locke uses his basic rational order to demonstrate that humans created the governing authority to protect human life and property. It should be stressed that Locke considers the labor of a person to be his property. Thus slavery and forced labor become a type of robbery. Readers will note that Locke separates the community, which basically consists of people using their informal rules and manners, from the government. Locke demonstrates that government is not a be all but has only certain limited functions in the community. Locke then demonstrates that a ruler who governs for the benefit of himself or for the benefit of a small elite to the detriment of the rest of the citizens of the community is in effect making war on the community and its members. Such a ruler should be overthrown. Locke thus provides the rational for overthrowing absolute monarchs and other tyrants. Locke demonstrates that the totalitarian Nazi, Leninist, and Maoist tyrants have no right to govern since the basic principle is to confiscate the property and people of the community to serve the leadership. Locke, when read in its entirety, is a strong voice for liberty and justice.

Very smart man and a lot of insight on government. The Declaration and the Constitution could have been written without this knowledge. Every American should read this work.

John Locke showed us the need for understanding nature and the needs of man. Locke had an immense understanding of man's inability to control self interest and greed.

This is a great book. Well written. Easy to understand. It gives the knowledge to understand how and why the founding fathers came to create our Constitution.

"The enjoyment of property that [man] has in this state [the state of nature] is very unsafe, very insecure. This makes him willing to quit a 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." Locke is one of the most influential philosophers of all time. In his Second Treatise, Locke lays the foundation for what has become modern western civilization. Locke's arguments are fully developed as he addresses his two greatest adversaries, Sir Robert Filmer and Thomas Hobbes. Though his critique of Filmer's

'Patriarcha' is primarily addressed in the First Treatise and only summed up in the first chapter of the Second Treatise, his ideas of the 'tabula rasa,' refuting the divine right of Kings is the foundation of the essay. Locke also gives a profound critique of Hobbes, as he sets forth the true 'state of nature.' Locke's rational and logical conclusions make his ideas extremely easy to understand. This is a must read, since having a clear understanding of Locke's state of nature, state of war, property, power, political and civil societies, conquest, usurpation, and tyranny are fundamental to understanding the history and politics of America.

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