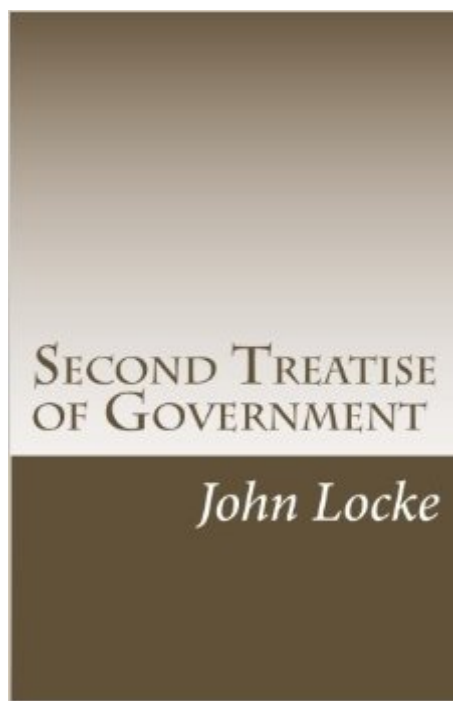


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Second Treatise Of Government



Synopsis

In the Second Treatise of Government, John Locke develops a number of notable themes of philosophy, epistemology and free will & determinism. He outlines a theory of civil society by describing the state of nature, wherein individuals are under no obligation to obey one another but are each themselves judge of what the law of nature requires. John Locke argues that all men are created equal in the state of nature by God, and he goes on to explain the hypothetical rise of property and civilization, and in the process he explains that only legitimate governments are those that have the consent of the people and therefore any government that rules without the consent of the people can, in theory, be overthrown. Second Treatise of Government also covers conquest and slavery, property, representative government, and the right of revolution. In addition, other broad topics are indirectly covered, such as politics & social sciences, philosophy, epistemology, and free will & determinism. John Locke was an English philosopher and physician, widely regarded as one of the most influential of Enlightenment thinkers and commonly known as the Father of Liberalism. John Locke was also considered one of the first of the British empiricists, and he is equally important to social contract theory. Locke's work greatly affected the development of epistemology and political philosophy and his contributions to classical republicanism and liberal theory are reflected in the United States Declaration of Independence. Second Treatise of Government is often required textbook reading in various politics & social sciences courses.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In his book, Second Treatise of Government, John Locke (1632 - 1704) writes that all humans are born equal with the same ability to reason for themselves, and because of this, government should

have limitations to ensure that people are free from the arbitrary will of another person, according to the laws of nature. Government, in Locke's view, is a social contract between the people in control, and the people who submit to it. The editor of this edition, C. B. Macpherson, gives a little background and overview in his introduction to this book. He writes that the book "was directed against the principles of Sir Robert Filmer, whose books, asserting the divine authority of kings and denying any right of resistance, were thought by Locke and his fellow Whigs to be too influential among the gentry to be left unchallenged by those who held that resistance to an arbitrary monarch might be justified." (p. viii) Locke's book served as a philosophical justification for revolting against tyrannical monarchies in the Glorious Revolution and the American Revolution. His book was practically quoted in the Declaration of Independence. Locke lays out his basis for government on the foundation that people are able to reason. Because of this, people have inherent freedoms or natural rights. Though he believed in reason, Locke was an empiricist, meaning he believed that all knowledge of the world comes from what our senses tell us. The mind starts as a "tabula rasa", latin for an empty slate. As soon as we are born, we immediately begin learning ideas. Thus, all the material for our knowledge of the world comes to us through sensations. Nevertheless, Locke had an unshakable faith in human reason. He believed that people do learn what is right and wrong, regardless of what they choose to do.

I'm no genius. A pedant, perhaps, and an arrogant jerk, but not a guy with the kind of education it seems other reviewers have. I can't tell you who Locke's friends were or what his political connections were, either. I have some vague notion that Locke's and Mill's ideas influenced the philosophical basis of the American founding documents, but I'm just a soldier who sometimes likes to bite off more than he can chew--I want to know the stuff them smart people do, and don't see any reason I shouldn't! So if you're like me, let me encourage you to get this book. Your friends will almost certainly call you a nerd (after all, who reads 17th century political philosophy for FUN?), and it'll take a few pages to cut your teeth on the language, but after you get going, this book is a breeze. I can't tell you the philosophical doctrines nor their framework in several distinct points, but I can tell you this: the language, to one of average education, was a little hard to wrap my brain around, but what worked for me was just to set a pace and trudge through it without getting hung up on the one sentence that twisted my mind into a pretzel. After a few pages (maybe 10 or 15) I found that my brain was correcting for the nature of the wording, and for the rest of the book, I swear, I understood what was going on through the second treatise and the Letter, too. After I got going, I was all highlighters and folded corners, but it had too many profound and simple statements to save

them all in my head. If you're even vaguely political, this book will make points as absolutely applicable to today's world politics as it did to those of the bygone time.

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