

Two Treatises of Government Study Guide

Two Treatises of Government by John Locke

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Contents

Two Treatises of Government Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
The First Treatise of Government, Chapters 1-5, pp. 5-36.....	4
Chapters 6-10, pp. 37-73.....	6
Chapter 11, pp. 73-112.....	8
Chapters 1-5, pp. 115-139.....	9
Chapters 6 - 10, pp. 140 - 181.....	11
Chapters 11- 15, pp. 182 - 204.....	13
Chapters 16- 19, pp. 205 - 240.....	16
Characters.....	19
Objects/Places.....	21
Themes.....	23
Style.....	25
Quotes.....	27
Topics for Discussion.....	34



Plot Summary

Two Treatises of Government is the book in which John Locke explains his concept of modern liberalism. In this book he expresses his belief that the purpose of political societies is to defend the life, liberty and property of citizens of that society. The only source of authority for a government is from the people. When a government becomes tyrannical, then people have the right to stage a revolution against that government.

Locke was writing in response to events that were occurring around him. He had just returned to England from exile in France and was incensed at the treatment of the Whigs by Charles II, who ruled under the pretext of absolutism and the divine right of rulers. These are two of the doctrines that Locke was opposed to and set out to destroy with his writings. Locke himself had been labeled a seditious agent of the Whigs.

Locke had not always been the radical he was labeled as by the king. He had always been quite conservative, but his father had fought against Charles I, in the Civil War and this is to what Locke's radicalism is attributed. When Charles II, was restored to the throne, Locke began his writing. He wrote many political essays during his time. Locke served as a member of the household of Lord Ashley, first Earl of Shaftesbury, who was very hostile to Charles II. Here, Locke learned about commerce in the American colonies and the slave trading companies.

Two Treatises of Government was a controversial book when it was published. The First Treatise was written when they still believed that they could peacefully bring about a change in the monarch. Locke did not yet promote the right for insurrection that he supported in the Second Treatise. That came about because of the crown's crackdown on dissenters and the treason trials, although much of it is attributed to Locke's reaction to Sir Robert Filmer's stance on absolutism.

Locke expounds his views of man based on freedom and equality. By nature, man drifts into communities and Locke talks about a social contract, which defines the state of civil society. The natural state is what was propagated by Filmore and denying that was basically viewed in the same terms as denying the authority of the Bible. This is one of the views that Locke reacted against when he wrote Two Treatises of Government.

Locke looks at the functioning of civil society and from where its authority and power are derived. The book is a study of political power and where it is derived from and is interesting reading for students of political science. It was the subject of quite a bit of controversy when it was first published, especially since he supported the view that the population had the right to revolt against tyranny.



The First Treatise of Government, Chapters 1-5, pp. 5-36

The First Treatise of Government, Chapters 1-5, pp. 5-36 Summary and Analysis

The book begins with a discussion of slavery and the fact that it is the opposite of what the nation (seventeenth-century England) stands for, but Locke feels, that is not what Sir Robert Filmer's Patriarcha says. This treatise tells all men that they are slaves, according to Locke. No man is born free when the monarchy is based on absolutism, and there are many people, especially in the last generation, who are promoting the view of rule by divine rights. "To make way for this doctrine they have denied mankind a right to natural freedom, whereby they have not only, as much as in them lies, exposed all subjects to the utmost misery of tyranny and oppression, but have also unsettled the titles, and shaken the thrones of princes: (For they too, by these men's systems, except only one, are all born slaves, and by divine right, are subjects to Adam's right heir); as if they had designed to make war upon all government, and subvert the very foundations of human society, to serve their present turn" (First Treatise, pg. 6).

Belief in the divine rights of kings basically results in slavery for all of men. Since men are not born free, they do not have the right to choose those who govern them. The ruler is an absolute ruler, just as Adam was. This is a fact of nature according to Filmer, who feels that this is true since man is born in subjugation to his parents. He can call this subjugation a royal or fatherly authority, which then means that it extends to the ruling monarch. Locke feels that Filmer should have defined these terms better than he did. Filmer feels that fatherhood and fatherly authority began with Adam. The power of the fathers is the same thing as the power of the kings.

The right or power was vested in Adam and his descendants. Just as Adam had the right of supremacy over his family, so the king has the right of supremacy over his subjects. This power is absolute and unlimited. Locke feels that Filmer's view does nothing but flatter the ambition of the monarchs. It is based on the sovereignty of Adam that monarchs justify their absolute power. Locke questions where the proof is for the absolute power of Adam that is used by royalty basing their claims to rule by divine right. Locke says that he cannot find any proof as Filmer claims there is in scripture. The only thing that Locke can find is the commandment Honor thy father, and he asks if there is anyone who knows where there is proof.

Locke also disagrees with Filmer over Adam's creation being the cause for the denial of freedom to man. Adam was created by God; Locke has no problem with that belief. Adam was the monarch of the world after his creation, although he didn't have any subjects, but that didn't matter. There was no government at the time. Adam was told to multiply and populate the world. Filmer claims that Adam had the right of governance as soon as he was created, but Locke disagrees. Adam was not even a father at that point



and could not have the right to be a governor according to Locke. Filmer claims Adam was governor in habit, though not in act when he was first created. He didn't have to be a father or have subjects to govern. It seems that Locke is splitting hairs in some points here, but he does say that Filmer has put together the arguments in such a way that they appear to be strong, until someone begins to question the details, as Locke is doing.

Locke goes on to examine the passage from Genesis and concludes that it was not a grant from God to have power over all men. God made the animals and other creatures on succeeding days of the Creation. Man and living creatures were not all made at the same time. God tells Adam and Eve to have dominion, and Locke says that this was said to both of them, not just to Adam. The donation was by God to all of mankind, not just to Adam. Sir Robert, however, concludes that since the term children of men is used, it did not refer to Adam, who had no father. Locke does not feel that the Bible gives Adam any power over even the animals, let alone the rest of mankind.

"This lies so obvious in the plain words, that anyone but our author would have thought it necessary to have shown, how these words that seemed to say the quite contrary, gave Adam monarchical absolute power over other men, or the sole property in all the creatures, and methinks in a business of this moment, and that whereon he builds all that follows, he should have done something more than barely cite words which apparently make against him; for I confess, I cannot see anything in them, tending to Adam's monarchy, or private dominion, but quite the contrary" (First Treatise, pg. 30). Locke feels that he has refuted Filmer's claim that God gave Adam private dominion.

Filmer claims that Genesis 3:16 provides the basis for the grant of government. The power of fatherhood is given to Adam, and from this derives the right of monarchy. Locke disagrees that Eve and all who came after her had to be subjected to the power of Adam.



Chapters 6-10, pp. 37-73

Chapters 6-10, pp. 37-73 Summary and Analysis

It is basically the subjugation of children to the rule of the father that is used to justify the royal authority over subjects. The children are basically slaves to the father who sires them. "But grant that the parents made their children, gave them life and being, and that hence there followed an absolute power. This would give the father but a joint dominion with the mother over them. For nobody can deny but that the woman hath an equal share, if not the greater, as nourishing the child a long time in her own body out of her own substance. There it is fashioned, and from her receives the materials and principles of its constitution; and it is so hard to imagine the rational soul should presently inhabit the yet unformed embryo, as soon as the father has done his part in the act of generation, that if it must be supposed to derive anything from the parents, it must certainly owe most to the mother; but be that as it will, the mother cannot be denied an equal share in begetting of the child, and so the absolute authority of the father will not arise from hence. " (First Treatise, pg. 40).

Locke goes on to dispute Filmer's claim that God gave man dominion over women. He says that he can't find anything in Genesis to substantiate Filmer's claim. Locke then discusses instances of cannibalism in Peru. It is views like those of Filmer that lead to acts such as cannibalism. A passage in Exodus states that obedience to kings and rules stems from the commandment to honor thy father. This also determines the kind of government that people will have in the form of a monarchy. Locke goes on to provide a long list of citations from the Bible showing references to both father and mother. Homage of the children is not just directed to the father, but to both parents. The Fifth Commandment applies to both parents, not just to one, as Filmer tries to imply.

Locke says that obedience to the king cannot be inferred from the Fifth Commandment as Filmer believes. Filmer and others used this commandment to set up powers that weren't meant to be. The fact that sovereignty is shared between both parents basically destroys the inferred sovereignty of the king and the form of government as monarchical as Filmer claimed. The duty of honor and obedience is due to the natural father, not to a magistrate or prince. Locke feels that he has refuted the doctrine of absolute power of monarchs based on this argument.

The basis for government, according to Locke, depends on the origin of property. The only basis for property seems to be fatherhood, with the children being the property of the father. Locke says it is hard to understand why this is the only origin that there is but all monarchs derive their power from Adam and his power of fatherhood.

If things were as Filmer proclaimed and Adam did have the sole right of dominion and power, what happens to that power when Adam dies? The father's estate goes to the eldest son upon the father's death, which means that the eldest son inherits the father's dominion. This then places the other brothers under the dominion of the elder brother. If



it didn't happen this way, Locke says, then Filmer's argument for the monarchy is destroyed. The titles of fatherhood and property seem now to give sovereignty to the eldest son. Locke now has to examine how the sovereignty of Adam passes to succeeding generations of princes.

Filmer's logic means that all succeeding monarchs must obtain their rights to rule from the first monarch. All rulers must be descendants of Adam. (Since Adam was the First Man, one wonders who else any man could be a descendant of!) Kings are the fathers of their people. They are either the heirs of fathers of people or they are the heirs of usurpers of power. These are the only two ways that kings can come to power according to Filmer.

To summarize: "...but were the absolute monarchy as clear as our author would desire it, as I presume it is the contrary, yet it could be of no use to the government of mankind now in the world, unless he also make out these two things. First, that this power of Adam was not to end with him, but was upon his decease conveyed entire to some other person, and so on to posterity. Secondly, that the princes and rulers now on earth, are possessed of this power of Adam, by a right way of conveyance derived to them" (First Treatise, pg. 60). If the first isn't true, then there is no basis for sovereignty of monarchs. If the second isn't true, then present rulers have no basis for their rule or subjugation of their people. Filmer based most of his arguments on the right of inheritance.

As far as the other living creatures that were created, man had the right to use these creatures. Adam's primary heir had no more of a right to these creatures than did other men.



Chapter 11, pp. 73-112

Chapter 11, pp. 73-112 Summary and Analysis

This last chapter in the First Treatise is concerned with the heir to the power. Who does Filmer say the heir should be? The heir has to be someone who has the right to be the ruler over other men, and this right or power is given by God. Filmer talks about something called eldest parents and claims that the right of inheritance of the power are to Adam's line. Says Locke: "To whom? 'To Adam's line and posterity', says our author. A notable limitation, a limitation to all mankind. For if our author can find anyone amongst mankind that is not of the line and posterity of Adam, he may perhaps tell him who the next heir of Adam, he may perhaps tell him who this next heir of Adam is: but for us, I despair how this limitation of Adam's empire to his line and posterity will help us to find out one heir" (First Treatise, pg. 76). The fact that the eldest son is the heir has Locke refer to the verse in the Bible where Cain is told that he will ruler over his brother Abel.

Locke does not feel that the verse meant that Cain would have dominion over his brother just because he, Cain, was older than Abel. He also cites the case of Jacob buying his brother's birthright. At that time, dominion was measured in terms of the amount of goods the firstborn would inherit. Locke points out that birthright is not the same as dominion, and there is confusion over who is the heir of Adam. This means that there is confusion over who is to govern and who is to be ruled, since all men can have the right of inheritance.

Locke discusses some of the Biblical kings and their inheritance. There were instances where the size of the army and its success determined who would be king. The issue of power and inheritance come up again with Noah and the flood. There is the question of whether Noah divided the world up between his sons. If he did, then the question of divine rights is laid to rest, since its premise is destroyed. Locke also feels that Filmer's argument leads to the fact that if paternal authority came from Adam, then there could only be one king in the world. Since the world has more than one king, then the right to rule comes from some other original than fatherhood.



Chapters 1-5, pp. 115-139

Chapters 1-5, pp. 115-139 Summary and Analysis

Locke feels that his First Treatise has shown the following: "(1) That Adam had not either by natural right of fatherhood, or by positive donation from God, any such authority over his children, or dominion over the world as is pretended. (2) That if he had, his heirs, yet, had no right to it. (3) That if his heirs had, there being no law of nature nor positive law of God that determined, which is the right heir in all cases that may arise, the right of succession, and consequently of bearing rule, could not have been certainly determined. (4) That if even that had been determined, yet the knowledge of which is the eldest line of Adam's posterity, being so long since utterly lost, that in the races of mankind and families of the world, there remains not to one above another, the least pretense to be the eldest house, and to have the right of inheritance" (Second Treatise, pg. 115).

Locke now turns his attention to the subject of political power. This, he says, is the power that a magistrate has over a subject. It is different from other kinds of power, such as the power of a father over a child, or a husband over a wife or a master over a slave. Political power involves the making of laws. Some of these laws may carry death penalties with them or there may be lesser penalties. But the purpose is to regulate and preserve property.

Understanding political power means there must be a state of perfect freedom for men to order their action and to dispose of their property. This must occur within the laws of nature, and the people exist within a state of equality. This is a state of liberty, where power and jurisdiction are reciprocal. Even though man has considerable liberty, he is not free to destroy himself or creatures within his possession. He is also not at liberty to harm other people or to violate the rights of others.

Man has a right to restrain others from violating these rights in addition to punishing offenders. Men who have sustained damages have the right to seek reparations. People have the right and the duty to prevent crimes. Only the injured party has the right to take reparations. The magistrate cannot give the injured party satisfaction, since the individual must do this on his own. Crimes such as murder have no compensation possible, but men have the right to kill a murderer in the state of nature.

What degree of punishment is required from transgressions less serious than murder? The punishments must be severe enough to keep the offender from repeating the transgression. Injured parties cannot be trusted to be completely objective to act as judges in their own cases. Judges should be accountable for their decisions.

War puts man at risk of losing his life. Man is being used by one in authority to settle his (the authority's) problems, and men have a right to destroy that which threatens them, and war is basically a threat against life. Men are forced to serve in a war. "To be free



from such force is the only security of my preservation, who would take away that freedom, which is the fence to it: so that he who makes an attempt to enslave me, thereby puts himself into a state of war with me. He that in the state of nature, would take away that freedom, that belongs to anyone in that state, must necessarily be supposed to have a design to take away everything else, that freedom being the foundation of all the rest: as he that in the state of society, would take away the freedom belonging to those of that society or commonwealth, must be supposed to design to take away from them everything else, and so be looked on as in a state of war." (Second Treatise, pg. 123). Wars, once begun, continue until the aggressor agrees to establish a peace.

The natural liberty of man suggests that man should not be subject to the will of other men. But man is subject to the will of the government when it legislates. Freedom does not give everyone the right to do what he wants. The commonwealth gives men the rules to live by. Freedom is still the freedom to not be subjected to absolute arbitrary power. Slavery, in a way, is an extension of the state of war. Man is subjected to the power of another. Men can sell themselves into bondage, but this is not the same thing as slavery. The master does not have the power of life over those who sell themselves into bondage, as the master does over those who are slaves.

Man has the right to food and drink and other things of nature, just as Adam had. But this does not describe how men come to own property, and this is what Locke looks at now. God gave Adam the earth for the support and comfort of man. He uses an example of a man picking up acorns and eating them. The acorns belong to everyone in common, not just to one entity. Man does not need consent to eat them. Man establishes his right of property by the labor he expends in finding and removing the acorns.

There is no reason to believe that God intended for common property to remain common, according to Locke. Man uses his labor in making things such as bread to make property his own. It is labor that gives the right of property, when it is applied to something that is owned in common.



Chapters 6 - 10, pp. 140 - 181

Chapters 6 - 10, pp. 140 - 181 Summary and Analysis

This section begins with a discussion of paternal power, which was basically the subject of the First Treatise. This is the belief that places the fate of children in the hands of the father instead of under the power of both parents. Locke feels that this power over children belongs to both parents, not just to the father, even though this power is given the name of paternal power. He reiterates his belief that all men are created equal in nature, but children do not experience this in their early years. They are all subject to the law that was to govern Adam and his posterity, and that is the law of reason. Children cannot obey the law of reason until they are old enough to understand what reason is. The individual is free when he reaches this predetermined age. This, explains Locke, is how natural freedom and the rule of parents fit together.

The duty of the parent as guardian over the child is terminated when the child reaches a reasonable age, and then the obligation of the parent ceases. In America, if the father dies, the duties of the father go to the mother. The rule of the parents is not perpetual, and it is the municipal law of the country that determines when this guardianship comes to an end. This guardianship is not the same thing as the right to dispose of their children or their lives. Even though the parents' right of guardianship terminates when the child reaches a determined age, the duty of the child to respect the parents does not end at this age. It is a lifelong obligation and duty, and the parents are entitled to expect this respect.

Political power and paternal power are not the same thing. They are each separate and distinct powers. They each come from a different foundation and exist for a different purpose. Paternal power does not give the father the right to make laws as political power does. Husband and wife have a conjugal relationship. The conjunction between the two should last as long as necessary to nurture their young.

When men enter into a society, they come together to make a government and empower a legislature to make laws for them in the public good. They appoint judges to settle controversies. Locke feels that absolute monarchy is not consistent with civil society and is not a civil form of government. It doesn't matter what the ruler is called, and even if the monarchy is absolute, the subjects can still appeal to the law.

Since man is free, he can not be subjected to the political power of another without his consent. This is the meaning of joining into a community. Men give up some of their natural liberty because they agree to abide by the vote of the majority in that society. When a man is unfit to be ruler, then the citizens have the right to have him removed. With families in a commonwealth, the eldest son inherits. This was the right of succession that was established.



Most of these rules did not seek to oppress the people. This meant that there was no attempt on the part of the people to limit the magistrate in any way. Both sides learned to curb the abuses of power. This is how people willingly submitted to the rule of another. They willingly came together and put one man in control of government. As long as there were no abuses of power, it was a situation that was beneficial to both sides.

If it is not possible for men of liberty to come together and form a lawful government, why, Locke asks, are there so many monarchies in the world? Men who are born under government are basically free to begin their own monarchies if others unite and designate one of them as the monarch. It doesn't happen often in history, but it does happen. A person is a subject of the government where his possessions and property are located, no matter what the parentage of his mother.

Will a man who is his own lord and has freedom in the state of nature give up that freedom? Will he submit to the dominion of another? Nature gives him the right to do so, if he so chooses. Sometimes man is offered more safety in such a situation. He minimizes danger by joining another society. The principle benefit is the preservation of property. Man has the right to do what he thinks is best for himself. He also has the right to punish crimes. He gives up both of these rights to a certain extent when he becomes a member of a society. The society handles both of these things and maintains peace, safety and the public good for the people.

The kind of government that men devise depends on how many are involved in the making and executing of laws. When the whole community is involved, the government is a perfect democracy. When only a few men are involved, the government is an oligarchy, and when the power is in the hands of one man, the government is a monarchy. The community can make whatever kind of government they want.



Chapters 11- 15, pp. 182 - 204

Chapters 11- 15, pp. 182 - 204 Summary and Analysis

The fundamental law of nature involves man's joining into society and establishing legislative power. The first fundamental natural law is to preserve the society and the people in it. The people hold the legislative to be supreme and unalterable and above the edict of some other power. It is backed by the force and obligation of law, and the authority to make laws comes from the members of the community.

People in the community cannot transfer more power than they have. The power of the community represents the joint power of all of the members of that community. The power of the legislator is for the good of all members of that society and not just to benefit a few members of the society. This means that the purpose of the power cannot be to destroy or enslave the members of the society. "Thus the law of nature stands as an eternal rule to all men, legislators as well as others. The rules that they make for other men's actions, must, as well as their own and other men's actions, be conformable to the law of nature, i.e. to the will of God of which that is a declaration, and the fundamental law of nature being the preservation of mankind, no human sanction can be good, or valid against it" (Second Treatise, pg. 184).

The ruler is expected to follow the laws and not make arbitrary decision. People know what the rules are that define their rights, and they are trusted to abide by the rules. They expect the same thing of their ruler. Society must have defined laws and no absolute arbitrary power. Property is protected in this way, and it can't be taken by the ruler. Preservation of property is why men enter into communities and governments. If someone can take another's property at will, then there is no property that is owned. The government defines the rules that govern the ownership of property; they don't seize the property for their own use arbitrarily. In the case of armies, they function based on obedience to the superior officer. In spite of the authority of the commanding officer, they don't have the authority to take any of the soldier's possessions.

Since people benefit from the protection of government, they should be expected to pay for that protection. This form of payment or taxation is done with the consent of the majority. Taxes cannot be levied without the consent of the people. Taxes also cannot be raised without the consent of the people. Once the people decide the form of government that they want, no one can tell them that they are wrong. They have authorized those who make laws for them. Even the legislature cannot transfer the authority to someone else. Laws exist for the good of society.

Legislative power is defined as how the community will use its resources for the preservation and betterment of the society and its members. The legislation of the laws is to be separate from the execution of the law. One entity should not be charged with both duties. This is another way of saying that there should be a separation of powers in the governments. Even with separation of powers, the government acts as one body,



especially in matters of war and peace and leagues and alliances. This is referred to as federative power. The executive and federative powers exist side by side. The executive enforces the laws of the society. The federative is charged with matters of the security of the society. The executive and federative are two distinct powers that must be delegated and managed in the society.

Locke believes that a commonwealth can have one supreme power, and that is the legislative. All the rest of government must be subordinate to the legislative, and the people must have a way to remove or change the legislative when it acts contrary to their best interests. In other words, the people have the right to revolt against the government when it becomes tyrannical and acts contrary to their best interests. This can also be handled by elections. In this case, there must be a set time and mechanism for convening the legislature for this purpose. There must be some mechanism in place for the power of choosing.

The executive has a fiduciary trust in calling and dismissing the legislature. This means his function is for the safety of the people. Thus, someone must always be present from the executive to perform this duty. The people have a right to be duly represented in this legislature. The laws should not be an encroachment on the executive or prince because they should be for the good of the society. The goals of the executive should not differ from the goals of the community. The wisest of rulers always had the largest prerogative throughout history. Prerogative is defined as the discretion to act even without laws in place or doing the public good without having formal rules.

In situations where the executive was weak or acting in his own self interest, the people had to have the laws put in place to limit the prerogative of the executive and to guarantee that the public good was protected. It is incorrect to say that the people have encroached upon the prerogative in this situation. Having laws defining the prerogative is not the same thing as encroaching upon it. The laws limit the powers of an unwise ruler.

Locke finally discusses paternal, political and despotical power in the same chapter. Paternal power is the duty that parents have to their children, to guide and educate them until they attain the age of reason and can care for themselves. The child, in turn, has the duty to honor and respect his parents, even after he is beyond the age of reason. Political power is the power that man gives to society and government to act in their best interest for the preservation of man's property. The government makes the laws for the public good and punishes offenders. Despotical power is defined as the arbitrary power that one man has over another man. This despotical power, Locke defines, as the power to take away a man's life. War comes under this definition of power.

These three powers come about in different ways. Paternal power comes from nature. Political power comes about as a result of voluntary agreement among people to give the authority to legislators. Despotical power is the result of forfeiture as lords obtain power over those who are stripped of their own property. Property figures prominently in each kind of power. Paternal power exists because children don't know how to manage

their own property. Political power exists when men have property to manage and despotical power exists when people have no property.



Chapters 16- 19, pp. 205 - 240

Chapters 16- 19, pp. 205 - 240 Summary and Analysis

Governments are based on consent of the people that are governed. During war, this consent may be more or less discarded. Lands are taken during wars without the consent of the people. Conquest is not one of the originals of government, according to Locke. Destroying the old framework allows for the building of a new framework, but this cannot be done without the consent of the people. When lands are taken by force, as in a war, the new ruler never has a right over the people because of the lack of consent.

A war should leave men with the same amount of freedom as they had before the war. They should not be slaves due to conquest. The conqueror does not have a right to the possession of the people. "Let the conqueror have as much justice on his side, as could be supposed, he has no right to seize more than the vanquished could forfeit; his life is at the victor's mercy, and his service and goods he may appropriate to make himself reparation; but he cannot take the goods of his wife and children; they too had a title to the goods he enjoyed, and their shares in the estate he possessed" (Second Treatise, pg. 209).

Suppose the individual wronged another man. The situation between the two develops into a war. The aggressor loses and is conquered. His life may be at the mercy of the conqueror, but the life of his wife and children should not be at the conqueror's mercy. The children and the wife have a right to the husband's estate for their own sustenance. The conqueror also has a right to the estate. Locke feels that in this situation, the estate must be divided. It also matters if the war is just or unjust. An unjust war is by a ruler who does not have the authority to war over the matter. In either case, the outcome should not involve the children.

All commonwealths have rules regarding those who can rule. There is always the possibility of foreign usurpation. When usurpation occurs, this can be a change not only in the person who rules, but also in the form of government. A usurper is not the person who the people or the laws have chosen to rule them. The usurper cannot have a title until he has the consent of the people.

Usurpation occurs when one seizes power that belongs to another. Tyranny is the use of power that goes beyond the right. It is the exercise of a power that no one has the right to because it is used for personal use, not for the public good. Locke quotes King James I on the duties of a rightful king and how they differ from a tyrant. This does not only apply to monarchy, but to any form of government. Tyranny begins where law ends. These are situations where the one in charge exceeds his powers and then violates the rights of others.

When talking about the dissolution of government, Locke feels that a distinction must be made between the dissolution of government and the dissolution of society. Men agree



to come together in the form of a commonwealth and act as one. When the society is dissolved, the government cannot remain. This usually occurs due to a foreign conquest, although governments can be dissolved from within. The legislature maintains the will of the people as long as it is in existence. Laws are made to keep it in existence because once the legislature is broken, then dissolution can occur. The legislature is the one that is empowered by the people to make laws. If other people try to make laws, the people do not have to obey them because they do not have the authority to make laws.

Who can misuse the power of the commonwealth? This depends on the kind of government that exists. If the authority is usurped by a single hereditary person, such as a prince, then the legislative is changed. The individual sets up his own will to take the place of laws and the will of society. The laws of the society are overturned when this happens because it is done without the consent of the people. Government is taken over by a foreign power.

A government can also be dissolved when the executive abandons his duties. The laws that exist already cannot be executed, and the result is anarchy. There is no one to enforce the laws, and the result is that there is basically no government that functions in this situation. People in this situation must make do for themselves. They can come together to form a new kind of government that will function for their good.

A government can also be dissolved when the executive or legislature acts contrary to the public trust. This occurs if they invade the property of citizens or endanger their lives, liberties or property. The whole purpose of a society is to preserve property. This is why men authorize a legislature. When the legislator ceases to function to protect them and their property, they are basically in a state of war with the people who have the right to revolt against them.

The people have the right to rebel when the government becomes tyrannical and ceases to serve the public good. Honest mistakes by the government are not what Locke is talking about here. The people will work out those kinds of honest problems. Tyranny and abuse are what the people won't tolerate.

Whether the legislature is changed by usurpation of power or by a government that becomes abusive and acts contrary to the good of the citizens, the result is an act of rebellion by those who usurped the power of the existing legislative and laws. When this is done without the consent of the people, they basically institute a state of war against the people. This can also happen when the monarch puts his realm in the power of a foreign nation. A king betrays his people when he does this.

"To conclude, the power that every individual gave the society, when he entered into it, can never revert to the individuals again, as long as the society lasts, but will always remain in the community; because without this, there can be no community, no commonwealth, which is contrary to the original agreement: so also when the society hath placed the legislative in any assembly of men, to continue in them and their successors, with direction and authority for providing such successors, the legislative



can never revert to the people whilst that government lasts: because having provided a legislative with power to continue forever, they have given up their political power to the legislative, and cannot resume it. But if they have set limits to the duration of their legislative, and made this supreme power in any person, or assembly, only temporary: or else when by the miscarriages of those in authority, it is forfeiture; upon the forfeiture of their rulers, or at the determination of the time set, it reverts to the society, and the people have a right to act as supreme, and continue the legislative in themselves, or erect a new form, or under the old form place it in new hands, as they think good."



Characters

John Locke

John Locke, the author, was born to a family near Bristol, England. His father had been an attorney and his grandfather a clothier. His father had been a part of the Civil War against Charles I and it is believed that Locke derived his so-called radical views from this fact. He was not always a radical. He began as a conservative, who wanted to see the mixture of king, lords, commons and church restored. He was not always against absolutism and the divine rule of monarchs. Locke spent some time in exile in France, since he was branded a seditious agent by the king. He joined the staff of Lord Ashley, first Earl of Shaftesbury, who was later branded a traitor and lived in exile. There, Locke learned about commerce and affairs in the colonies. He even invested in slave holding companies.

Locke wrote his First Treatise in the 1679-1681, period and his Second Treatise in the 1681-1683, time period. He promoted the right of citizens to rebel against a tyrannical government and disputed the theory of divine right and absolutism, supported by Sir Robert Filmer. Filmer's theory was based on patriarchy, to which Locke was opposed. Locke talks about a social contract, which defines the state of civil society in which man lives.

Sir Robert Filmer

Sir Robert Filmer was from Kent. He was educated at Cambridge and graduated in 1604. He was made a knight by Charles I, whose monarchy he strongly supported. He did not become famous until he was middle aged, when he threw himself into the controversy between the king and the Commons regarding the divine right of kings.

He is the author of the Patriarcha, which was written around 1628-31, even though it was not published until 1680. This work basically supported absolutism or the divine right of monarchs and is how he became involved in the whole controversy. This doctrine basically says that Adam was the patriarch of mankind and that the kings derived their right to rule based on the patriarchy of Adam. The king is the father of the people, just as the father is the ruler of the household. Adam's power, then, was passed on to Noah and his family after the flood. From this idea, Charles I and other kings derive their right to rule.

Most of the book is written in opposition to Filmore's position on the divine right of monarchs. Locke uses Biblical citations to refute the claims of Filmer, and this runs through both the First and the Second Treatises, even though Filmer is only mentioned three times in the Second. Locke also brings up the interesting question of Noah and the flood.



King James I

King James I, was the king of England in 1603. He is quoted by Locke in talking about how a king rules for the benefit of his subjects and not for his own good. He explains the difference between a rightful king and a tyrant and how a rightful king has a duty to his subjects. A rightful king is proud to be bound by the laws of his kingdom because they exist for the good of the subjects. A king becomes a tyrant when he begins to rule and make decision for his own good and puts himself above his subjects.

Charles II

Charles II, was the king of England when John Locke began writing his political essays.

Adam

Adam was the first man and was created by God. Filmer and others claimed that this made Adam an absolute power, and that this power was the basis for the absolute power of the monarchs.

Eve

Eve was the first woman created by God. Locke claimed that Eve was created with equal rights of dominion.

Cain

Cain was the son of Adam and Eve.

Abel

Abel was the son of Adam and Eve.

Noah

Noah is mentioned several times. If Filmer is correct about his belief in divine rights stemming from Adam, what happens when Adam's line dies off in the flood?

Shem

Shem was the son of Noah.



Objects/Places

England

England is the birth place of John Locke.

France

France is the European country where Locke spent time in exile.

America

America at this time was colonized by the British, French and Spanish.

Peru

Peru is the home of the people that are used as examples of those practicing cannibalism.

Israel

Israel is the land in the Middle East that is mentioned several times during the references to the Bible and to events during Biblical times.

Holland

Holland is a European country where Locke did some of his writing.

Divine Right

Divine right is the belief that monarchs have a right to rule because they are descended from God through Adam.

Paternal Power

Paternal power is the power that a father has over children who have not yet attained their majority. Filmer used this to justify the existence of monarchy and absolute rule.

Political Power

Political power is an object of discussion through the Second Treatise.

Society

Society is a situation where men come together to form a government to promote their own welfare and to protect their property.



Themes

Refutation of Divine Rights

The First Treatise is dedicated to a refutation of divine rights. Divine rights, or the absolute authority of monarchs is the belief that monarchs are descended from God and thus empowered to rule over other men. Sir Robert Filmer wrote the Patriarcha in support of divine rights based on the paternal power of Adam. He claimed that rulers were descended from Adam and thus empowered to rule. This threw Filmer into the controversy between the king and the Commons over who does and doesn't have the right to rule.

Locke refutes Filmer's theory, who he usually refers to as "our author." Locke says that there is no where in the Bible where Adam is given the right to rule or to even have power over Eve. Parents have a duty to their children to care for them and to manage their property until the children reach the age of reason. Children then have a duty to honor and respect their parents, even after they are past the age of reason.

According to Locke, this theory of paternal rights does not justify the divine rights of monarchy rule by kings, as Filmer claims. Locke quotes heavily from the Bible to support his view and at one point wants to know how do you find someone who is not a descendant of Adam, the first man. Because of this, one cannot say that kings rule by divine right because they are descendants of Adam.

Purpose of Government

Government exists for a reason. Men have natural rights and natural freedoms. They have a natural right to defend and protect their property. They also have a right to seek reparations from those who violate them. Man does not always want to have to do these things on his own, so he comes together with other men to form a society and a government. Government then is formed through the consent of men.

Government exists to protect the property of its citizens and to protect the public good. Men give up their right to do these things on their own and empower a legislator to make laws and an executor to enforce the laws. In this way, man's rights and property are protected, since governments exist to protect their citizens and their property. The government and the ruler exist for the benefit of the people, not for their own benefit.

Governments can be changed when they don't serve the public good. Locke basically promotes the rights of people to rebel against a government that is tyrannical. If a ruler puts his own personal rights and wants ahead of the public, then those citizens have the right to replace the legislator. This was one of the views that made Locke such a controversial figure during his time.

Kinds of Power

A theme that runs throughout the book are the different kinds of powers that there are. There is more than one kind of power, which is a theme that begins at the beginning of the First Treatise. These various powers are defined, and their limitations are discussed. There is paternal power, which is the right of a father over his children. Young children cannot make their own decisions or manage their own property. Their parents must do it for them until they reach the age of reason.

Political power is the kind of power that exists in a society. People give their government the power to legislate laws that promote the public good, protect private property and protect the interests of citizens. The political power and authority of government derive from the consent of the people. Without consent, the government has no authority.

Despotical power is defined as a power that is beyond that which is given to a government. A person who exceeds his power is despotical. When this occurs, people have the right to rebel. Power cannot be abused without the despot facing the people and being replaced.



Style

Perspective

John Locke was a political writer of his time, during the seventeenth century. His father was an attorney, who had served in the Civil War, which is where it is believed that many of John's beliefs came from. He was in his fifties when he published *Two Treatises of Government* and had been living in exile in Holland and had just returned to England.

Locke's intended audience was the population of the time. His purpose was to refute the theory of divine rights and to publicize his own views of political economy and government. At the time, his book was controversial because Locke believed it was acceptable for a population to rebel against a government that was tyrannical. This was almost unheard of at the time.

The audience of today would not be scandalized at Locke's views. Revolutions come about in various ways, and today's world is accustomed to them. Today's audience would find Locke's views interesting but would not be scandalized at them or call him seditious, as he was called during his own time.

Tone

The tone of the book is not very objective. The author is totally opposed to Filmer's views from *Patriarcha* and spends the entire *First Treatise* refuting them. He makes his own point of view clear throughout the book. The *Second Treatise* is concerned with Locke's views of government.

The book, for the most part, is written in the first person with Locke as the narrator. This works because the book is about Locke's views and theories. He is telling the reader what he believes and what he thinks and his using other works, such as the Bible, to support his point of view.

The impact on the reader of today is probably very different than the impact on a reader from Locke's time. The book was considered scandalous in the seventeenth century. Locke was challenging the divine rights of kings and telling people that they had a right to rebel when government became tyrannical and ceased to serve the people's interests. In today's world, this would be taken for granted.

Structure

The book is divided into two parts. The *First Treatise of Government* is the first part of the book. It is divided into eleven chapters and is basically concerned with the issue of monarchy. Locke disputes Sir Robert Filmer and his views about the divine rights of

kings. Just because God created Adam and Adam was a father is not justification for a monarchy's divine right to rule.

The second part of the book contains the *Second Treatise of Government*. This is where Locke explains his political views. He discusses the different kinds of powers and how they differ from one another. This part is divided into nineteen chapters.

The book also contains a *Chronology of His Times*, which presents the chronological highlights of events that occurred during the lifetime of John Locke. This is interesting because it helps the reader to put the events into perspective. There is also a *Glossary*, *Notes on Locke's Additions*, *Suggestions for Further Readings* and a *Key Word Index*.



Quotes

"Slavery is so vile and miserable an estate of man, and so directly opposite to the generous temper and courage of our nation; that 'tis hardly to be conceived, that an Englishman, much less a gentleman, should please for it. And truly, I should have taken Sir Robert Filmer's Patriarcha as any other treatise, which would persuade all men, that they are slaves, and ought to be so, for such another exercise of wit, as was his who writ the encomium of Nero, rather than for a serious discourse meant in earnest, had not the gravity of the title and epistle the picture in the front of the book, and the applause that followed it, required me to believe, that the author and publisher were both in earnest.: (First, Treatise, pg. 5)

"And this authority of parents, he calls 'royal authority', 'fatherly authority', 'right of fatherhood'. One would have thought he would in the beginning of such a work as this, on which was to depend the authority of princes, and the obedience of subjects, have told us expressly what that fatherly authority is, have defined it, though not limited it, because in some other treatises of his he tells us, 'tis unlimited, and unlimitable; he should at least have given us such an account of it, that we might have had an entire notion of this 'fatherhood', or 'fatherly authority', whenever it came in our way in his writings." (First Treatise, pps. 7-8)

"But let us see, how he puts his creation and this appointment together. 'By the appointment of God,' says Sir Robert, 'as soon as Adam was created he was monarch of the world, though he had no subjects, for though there could not be actual government till there were subjects, yet by the right of nature it was due to Adam to be governor of his posterity: though not in act, yet at least in habit, Adam was a king from his creation.'" (First Treatise, pg. 14)

"And if God made all mankind slaves to Adam and his heirs, by giving Adam dominion over 'every living thing that moveth on the earth' chapter 1:28, as our author would have it, methinks Sir Robert should have carried his monarchical power one step higher, and satisfied the world, that princes might eat their subjects too, since God gave as full power to Noah and his heirs, chapter 9:2, to eat 'every living thing that moveth', as he did to Adam to have dominion over them, the Hebrew words in both places being the same." (First Treatise, pg. 22)

"And thus we have examined the two places of Scripture, all that I remember our author brings to prove 'Adam's sovereignty', that 'supremacy', which he says, 'it was God's ordinance should be unlimited in Adam, and as large as all the acts of his will' [138], viz. Genesis 1:28 and Genesis 3:16, one whereof signifies only the subjection of the inferior ranks of creatures to mankind, and the other the subjection that is due from a wife to her husband, both far enough from that which subjects owe the governors of political societies." (First Treatise, pps. 36-37)

"For had our author set down this command without garbling, as god gave it, and joined



mother to father, every reader would have seen that it had made directly against him, and that it was so far from establishing the 'monarchical power of the father', that it set up the mother equal with him, and enjoined nothing but what was due in common, to both father and mother: for that is the constant tenor of the Scripture, 'honor thy father and thy mother' (Exodus 20[12]); 'he that curseth his father or mother, shall surely be put to death' (verse 17); repeated Leviticus 20:9, and by our Savior (Matthew 15:4); 'ye shall fear every man his mother and his father' (Leviticus 19:3);" (First Treatise, pps. 43-44)

"Thus this new nothing, that is to carry with it all power, authority, and government; this fatherhood which is to design the person, and establish the throne of monarchs, whom the people are to obey, may, according to Sir Robert, come into any hands, anyhow, and so by his politics give to democracy royal authority, and make a usurper a lawful prince. And if it will do all these fine feats, much good do our author and all his followers with their omnipotent fatherhood, which can serve for nothing but to unsettle and destroy all the lawful governments in the world, and to establish in their room disorder, tyranny, and usurpation." (First Treatise, pg. 52)

"And here he makes inheritance or usurpation the only ways whereby kings come by this original power; but yet he tells us, 'this fatherly empire, as it was of itself hereditary, so it was alienable by patent and seizable by a usurper'. So then here inheritance, grant or usurpation will convey it. And last of all, which is most admirable, he tell [sic] us, 'it skills not which way kings come by their power, whether by election, donation, succession, or by any other means, for it is still the manner of the government by supreme power, that makes them properly kings, and not the means of obtaining their crowns'." (First Treatise, pps. 57-58)

"We must know how the first ruler, from whom anyone claims, came by his authority, upon what ground anyone has empire, what his title is to it, before we can know who has a right to succeed him in it, and inherit it from him. If the agreement and consent of men first gave a scepter into anyone's hand, or put a crown on his head, that also must direct its descent and conveyance. For the same authority, that made the first a lawful ruler, must make the second too, and so give right of succession: in this case inheritance or primogeniture, can in itself have no right, no pretence to it, any further than that consent, which established the form of the government, hath so settled the succession. And thus we see the succession of crowns, in several countries places it on different heads, and he comes by right of succession, to be a prince in one place, who would be a subject in another." (First Treatise, pps. 66-67)

"If kings, who are not heirs to Adam, have no right to sovereignty, we are all free till our author or anybody for him, will show us Adam's right heir. If there be but one heir of Adam, there can be but one lawful king in the world, and nobody in conscience can be obliged to obedience till it be resolved who that is; for it may be anyone who is not known to be of a younger house, and all others have equal titles." (First Treatise, pps. 72-73)



"In propriety of speech, and certainly propriety of speech is necessary in a discourse of this nature, 'eldest parents' signifies either the eldest men and women that have had children, or those who have longest had issue: and then our author's assertion will be, that those fathers and mothers who have been longest in the world, or longest fruitful, have by divine institution a right to civil power. If there be any absurdity in this, our author must answer for it: and if his meaning be different from my explication, he is to be blamed, that he would not speak it plainly. This I am sure, 'parents' cannot signify heirs male, nor 'eldest parents' an infant child: who yet may sometimes be the true heir, if there can be but one. And we are hereby still as much at a loss, who civil power belongs to, notwithstanding this 'assignment by divine institution', as if there had been no such assignment at all, or our author, had said nothing of it." (First Treatise, pg. 75)

"Political power then I take to be a right of making laws with penalties of death, and consequently all less penalties, for the regulating and preserving of property, and of employing the force of the community, in the execution of such laws, and in the defense of the commonwealth from foreign injury, and all this only for the public good." (Second Treatise, pg. 116)

"To this strange doctrine, viz. that in the state of nature, everyone has the executive power of the law of nature, I doubt not but it will be objected, that it is unreasonable for men to be judges in their own cases, that self-love will make men partial to themselves and their friends. And on the other side, that ill nature, passion and revenge will carry them too far in punishing others. And hence nothing but confusion and disorder will follow, and that therefore God hath certainly appointed government to restrain the partiality and violence of men [Romans 13:4]. I easily grant, that civil government is the proper remedy for the inconveniences of the state of nature, which must certainly be great, where men may be judges in their own case, since 'tis easily to be imagined, that he who was so unjust as to do his brother an injury, will scarce be so just as to condemn himself for it: but I shall desire those who make this objection, to remember that absolute monarchs are but men, and if government is to be the remedy of those evils, which necessarily follow from men's being judges in their own cases, and the state of nature is therefore not [to] be endured, I desire to know what kind of government that is, and how much better it is than the state of nature, where one man commanding a multitude, has the liberty to be judge in his own case, and may do all his subjects whatever he pleases, without the least liberty to anyone to question or control those who execute his pleasure?" (Second Treatise pg. 121)

"The state of war is a state of enmity and destruction; and therefore declaring by word or action, not a passionate and hasty, but a sedate settled design, upon another man's life, puts him in a state of war with him against whom he has declared such an intention, and so has exposed his life to the other's power to be taken away by him, or anyone that joins with him in his defense, and espouses his quarrel: it being reasonable and just



I should have a right to destroy that which threatens me with destruction." (Second Treatise, pg. 122)

"The natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth, and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man, but to have only the law of nature for his rule." (Second Treatise, pg. 125)

"Was it a robbery thus to assume to himself what belonged to all in common? If such a consent as that was necessary, man had starved, notwithstanding the plenty God had given him. We see in commons, which remain so by compact, that 'tis the taking any part of what is common, and removing it out of the state nature leaves it in, which begins the property; without which the common is of no use. And the taking of this or that part, does not depend on the express consent of all the commoners. Thus the grass by hose has bit; the turfs my servant has cut; and the ore I have digged in any place where I have a right to them in common with others, become my property, without the assignation of consent of anybody. The labour that was mine, removing them out of that common state they were in, hath fixed my property in them." (Second Treatise, pps. 128-29)

"God gave the world to men in common; but since he gave it them for their benefit, and the greatest conveniences of life they were capable to draw from it, it cannot be supposed he meant it should always remain common and uncultivated. He gave it to the use of the industrious and ratiom, (and labour was to be his title to it); not to the fancy or covetousness' of the quarrelsome and contentious." (Second Treatise, pg. 131)

"Had but this one thing been well considered without looking any deeper into the matter, it might perhaps have kept men from running into those gross mistakes, they have made, about this power of parents: which however it might, without any great harshness, bear the name of absolute dominion, and regal authority, when under the title of paternal power it seemed appropriated to the father, would yet have sounded but oddly, and it the very name shown the absurdity, if this supposed absolute power over children had been called parental, and thereby have discovered, that it belonged to the mother too; for it will but very ill serve the turn of those men who contend so much for the absolute power and authority of the fatherhood, as they call it, that the mother should have any share in it. And it would have but ill supported the monarchy they contend for, when by the very name it appeared that that fundamental authority from whence they would derive their government of a single person only, was not placed in one, but two persons jointly." (Second Treatise, pgs. 140-41)

"Whenever therefore any number of men are so united into one society, as to quit every one his executive power of the law of nature, and to resign it to the public, there and there only is a political, or civil society. And this is done wherever any number of men, in the state of nature, enter into society to make one people, one body politic under one supreme government, or else when anyone joins himself to, and incorporates with any



government already made. For hereby he authorizes the society, or which is all one, the legislative thereof to make laws for him as the public good of the society shall require; to the execution whereof, his own assistance (as to his own decrees) is due." (Second Treatise, pg. 159)

"And thus we see, that foreigners, by living all their lives under another government, and enjoying the privileges and protection of it, though they are bound, even in conscience, to submit to its administration, as far forth as any denizen; yet do not thereby come to be subjects or members of that commonwealth. Nothing can make any man so, but his actually entering into it by positive engagement, and express promise and compact. This is that, which I think, concerning the beginning of political societies, and that consent which makes anyone a member of any commonwealth." (Second Treatise, pps. 177-78)

"The great and chief end therefore, of men uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the preservation of their property. To which in the state of nature there are many things wanting." (Second Treatise, pg. 178)

"The majority having, as has been showed, upon men's first uniting into society, the whole power of the community, naturally in them, may employ all that power in making laws for the community from time to time, and executing those laws by officers of their own appointing; and then the form of the government is a perfect democracy; or else may put the power of making laws into the hands of a few select men, and their heirs or successors; and then it is an oligarchy: if to him only for life, but upon his death the power only of nominating a successor to return to them; an elective monarchy. And so accordingly of these the community may make compounded and mixed forms of government, as they think good." (Second Treatise, pg. 181)

"It cannot be supposed that they should intend, had they a power so to do, to give to any one, or more, an absolute arbitrary power over their persons and estates, and put a force into the magistrate's hand to execute his unlimited will arbitrarily upon them: this were to put themselves into a worse condition than the state of nature, wherein they had a liberty to defend their right against the injuries of others, and were upon equal terms of force to maintain it, whether invaded by a single man, or many in combination." (Second Treatise, pg. 185)

"But because the laws, that are at once, and in a short time made, have a constant and lasting force, and need a perpetual execution, or an attendance thereunto: therefore 'tis necessary there should be a power always in being, which should see to the execution of the laws that are made, and remain in force. And thus the legislative and executive power come often to be separated." (Second Treatise, pg. 189)

"Though in a constituted commonwealth, standing upon its own basis, acting according to its own nature, that is, acting for the preservation of the community, there can be but



one supreme power, which is the legislative, to which all the rest are and must be subordinate, yet the legislative being only a fiduciary power to act for certain ends, there remains still in the people a supreme power to remove or alter the legislative, when they find the legislative act contrary to the trust reposed in them." (Second Treatise, pps. 190-91)

"Where the legislative and executive power are in distinct hands, (as they are in all moderated monarchies, and well-framed governments) there the good of the society requires, that several things should be left to the discretion of him, that has the executive power. For the legislators not being able to foresee, and provide, by laws, for all, that may be useful to the community, the executor of the laws, having the power in his hands, has by the common law of nature, a right to make use of it, for the good of the society, in many cases, where the municipal law has given no direction, till the legislative can conveniently be assembled to provide for it. Many things there are, which the law can by no means provide for, and those must necessarily be left to the discretion of him, that has the executive power in his hands, to be ordered by him, as the public good and advantage shall require: nay, 'tis fit that the laws themselves should in some cases give way to the executive power, or rather to this fundamental law of nature and government, viz. that as much as may be, all the members of the society are to be preserved." (Second Treatise, pg. 197)

"He, that shall consider the distinct rise and extent, and the different ends of these several powers, will plainly see, that paternal power comes as far short of that of the magistrate, as despotical exceeds it; and that absolute dominion, however placed, is so far from being one kind of civil society, that it is as inconsistent with it, as slavery is with property. Paternal power is only where minority makes the child incapable to manage his property; political where men have property in their own disposal; and despotical over such as have no property at all." (Second Treatise, pps. 204-205)

"As conquest may be called a foreign usurpation, so usurpation is a kind of domestic conquest, with this difference, that a usurper can never have right on his side, it being no usurpation but where one is got into the possession of what another has right to. This, so far as it is usurpation, is a change only of persons, but not of the forms and rules of the government: for if the usurper extend his power beyond, what of right belonged to the lawful princes, or governors of the commonwealth, 'tis tyranny added to usurpation." (Second Treatise, pg. 215)

"As usurpation is the exercise of power, which another hath a right to; so tyranny is the exercise of power beyond right, which nobody can have a right to. And this is making use of the power anyone has in his hands; not for the good of those, who are under it, but for his own private separate advantage. When the governor, however entitled, makes not the law, but his will, the rule' and his commands and actions are not directed to the preservation of the properties of his people, but the satisfaction of his own ambition, revenge, covetousness, or any other irregular passion." (Second Treatise, pg. 216)

"He that will with any clearness speak of the dissolution of government, ought, in the first place, to distinguish between the dissolution of the society, and the dissolution of the government. That which makes the community, and brings men out of the loose state of nature, into one politic society, is the agreement which everyone has with the rest to incorporate, and act as one body, and so be one distinct commonwealth. The usual, and almost only way whereby this union is dissolved, is the inroad of foreign force making a conquest upon them." (Second Treatise, pg. 222)

Topics for Discussion

What is the meaning of the term absolutism or divine right of monarchs?

How does Filmer relate absolute monarchism to Adam?

Why is Adam and Genesis important to Filmer and Locke?

What are some of the problems discussed about the right of inheritance when it comes to divine powers?

What are Locke's views on political power? How does this differ from paternal power?

How does labor establish the right of property?

Why do men form into communities with a government?

Explain the differences between paternal power, political power and despotical power.