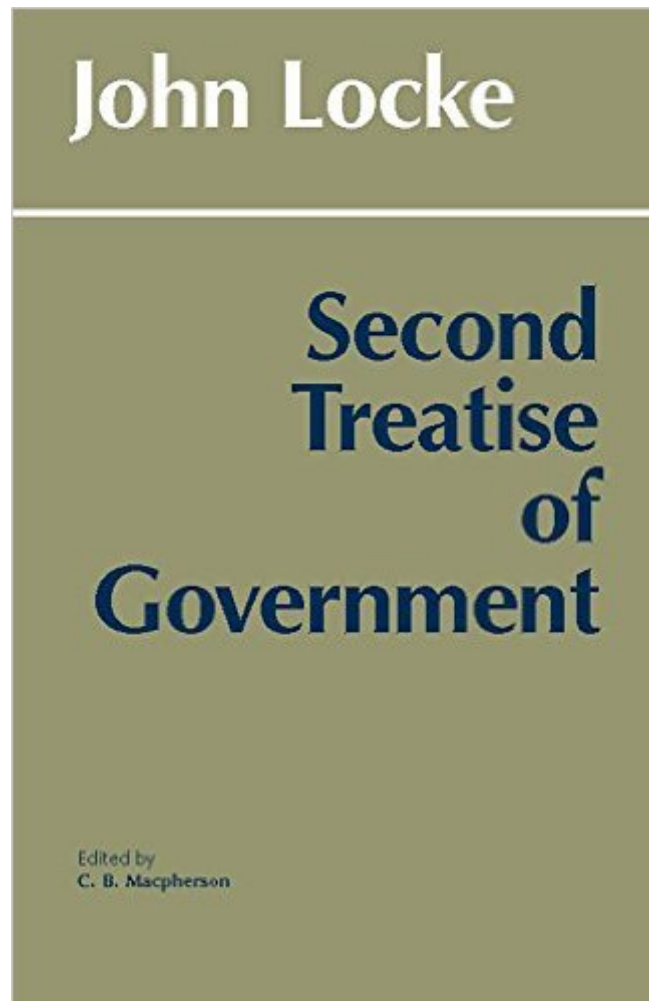


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Second Treatise Of Government (Hackett Classics)



Synopsis

The Second Treatise is one of the most important political treatises ever written and one of the most far-reaching in its influence. In his provocative 15-page introduction to this edition, the late eminent political theorist C. B. Macpherson examines Locke's arguments for limited, conditional government, private property, and right of revolution and suggests reasons for the appeal of these arguments in Locke's time and since.

Book Information

Series: Hackett Classics

Paperback: 124 pages

Publisher: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. (June 1, 1980)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0915144867

ISBN-13: 978-0915144860

Product Dimensions: 0.2 x 6 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 5 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (159 customer reviews)

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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 wan't 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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