

### 17.03. Introduction to Political Thought

#### Lecture Outline: Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chs. 1-4

Dates:	1632	Birth
	1649	Charles I executed
	1660	Restoration (Charles II ruled 1660-1685)
	1680	Exclusion Crisis and Robert Filmer's <i>Patriarcha</i>
	1683	Locke fled to Holland
	1685-88	Rule of James II
	1688	William and Mary crowned
	1689	Locke returned to England
	1704	Death

#### I. Background

##### A. Personal

1. Family: Puritan traders; father was captain in Parliamentary army in civil wars of 1640s
2. Service to Earl of Shaftesbury as physician and researcher

##### B. Locke's *Two Treatises* as theoretical justification for resistance to the sovereign

##### C. *First Treatise* directed against Robert Filmer's defense of the divine right of kings

##### D. Aim of *Second Treatise*

#### II. Dilemma of reading Locke: extraordinarily influential but philosophical weaknesses

##### A. Hobbes more influential philosophically (Rousseau, Kant)

##### B. Locke's philosophical weaknesses

1. Assertions of positions without adequate defense (majority rule, property rights)
2. Theological grounds that no longer command widespread assent

##### C. If Locke is best theoretical defense of liberal democratic institutions and his arguments are weak, is this a problem for us?

#### III. State of Nature

##### A. Locke on human nature

1. Equality
2. Freedom and rationality
3. Sociability

##### B. Differences with Hobbes

1. God and natural law restrain what people do
  - a. For Locke state of nature is "a state of peace, good will, mutual assistance and preservation" (§ 19)
  - b. State of nature degenerates into state of war because (i) details of law of nature unclear, (ii) whether and to what extent it has been violated unclear, (iii) not everyone is disposed to obey it
2. Every man has right to execute the law of nature
  - a. Objection: unreasonable for men to be judges in their own cases
  - b. Locke's reply
3. Property rights are pre-political

#### IV. Liberty

##### A. Natural liberty

1. To be under no restraint but the law of nature
2. Liberty is not license or freedom to do whatever one pleases

##### B. Civil liberty

1. Established by consent
2. To have common rules to live by and not to be subject to arbitrary will of another