

john locke two treatises of government 1690 worksheet answers

John Locke Two Treatises of Government 1690 Worksheet Answers: A Comprehensive Guide

john locke two treatises of government 1690 worksheet answers are crucial for students and scholars seeking to grasp the foundational principles of Western political thought. This seminal work by John Locke, published in 1690, profoundly influenced Enlightenment ideals and the development of democratic governance. Understanding its core arguments, particularly those addressing natural rights, the social contract, and the right to revolution, is essential for comprehending modern political philosophy. This detailed article will delve into the key concepts presented in Locke's Two Treatises of Government, providing insights that will illuminate typical worksheet questions and foster a deeper appreciation for Locke's enduring legacy. We will explore the historical context, break down the arguments of the First Treatise and the Second Treatise, and offer guidance for effectively answering related comprehension exercises.

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Understanding the Historical Context of Locke's Two Treatises

To fully appreciate John Locke's Two Treatises of Government, it is vital to understand the turbulent political landscape of 17th-century England. The work was published in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, a period marked by intense debate over the legitimacy of monarchy and the extent of royal power. Locke's primary objective was to challenge the prevailing doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings, particularly as espoused by Sir Robert Filmer in his Patriarcha. Filmer argued that monarchs derived their authority directly from God, tracing their lineage back to Adam, and that subjects had no right to resist their divinely appointed rulers. Locke's work, therefore, was not merely an academic exercise but a powerful political polemic designed to provide a philosophical justification for limited government and the rights of individuals against absolute power. The prevailing

political theories and the specific historical events, such as the English Civil War and the restoration of the monarchy, created an environment ripe for Locke's arguments favoring constitutionalism and individual liberty.

The intellectual climate of the time was also crucial. The rise of scientific inquiry and a growing emphasis on reason and empirical observation influenced Locke's philosophical approach. His epistemology, detailed in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, championed the idea that knowledge is derived from experience. This empiricist perspective informed his political philosophy, as he sought to ground governmental authority not in abstract dogma or tradition, but in observable principles of human nature and rational agreement. The philosophical debates surrounding sovereignty, natural law, and the relationship between the individual and the state were central to the intellectual currents that shaped Locke's revolutionary ideas.

The First Treatise: Refuting Divine Right and Patriarchal Authority

The First Treatise of Government is almost entirely dedicated to deconstructing Sir Robert Filmer's arguments in *Patriarcha*. Locke meticulously examines Filmer's claims about Adam's absolute dominion over the world, granted by God, and the subsequent inheritance of this patriarchal authority by kings. Locke systematically refutes the idea that political power is inherently hereditary and divinely ordained, demonstrating that Filmer's lineage arguments are flawed and logically unsound. He argues that there is no biblical or natural evidence to support the notion that Adam possessed such absolute power, nor that this power was passed down through generations to contemporary monarchs.

Locke employs careful textual analysis, pointing out the inconsistencies and contradictions within Filmer's reasoning. He challenges the very foundation of patriarchal authority, suggesting that the relationships between fathers and children, or husbands and wives, do not equate to the absolute political power claimed by kings. By dismantling Filmer's framework, Locke clears the ground for his own positive arguments for legitimate government, which are laid out in the Second Treatise. This extensive refutation serves to eliminate the most prominent philosophical obstacle to his more constructive political theories, emphasizing the man-made nature of political authority rather than its divine origin.

The Second Treatise: The Foundation of Civil Government

The Second Treatise is where John Locke presents his positive theory of government, outlining the principles that he believed should govern legitimate political authority. This treatise is far more influential and widely studied than the first, offering a robust framework for understanding liberal democracy. It begins with an exploration of the state of nature and the concept of natural law, moving through the necessity of forming a civil society and the establishment of government based on consent. Locke's articulation of these ideas

provided a philosophical blueprint for revolutions and constitutional governments, most notably the American Revolution.

Natural Rights and the State of Nature

Locke posits that all individuals are born into a state of nature, a condition preceding any civil government. In this state, individuals are governed by the law of nature, which is reason itself. This law dictates that all people are equal and independent, and no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions. These are what Locke famously terms natural rights, rights that are inherent and inalienable, not granted by any ruler or government. The state of nature, for Locke, is not a state of perpetual war, as Hobbes famously argued, but a state of liberty, albeit one constrained by natural law and the inherent rights of others.

The concept of natural rights is central to Locke's philosophy. He argues that individuals possess rights to life, liberty, and property that exist independently of any government. These rights are discovered through reason and are universally applicable. Locke's emphasis on natural rights was a radical departure from previous political theories that often placed the collective or the sovereign above the individual. He believed that the primary purpose of government is to protect these pre-existing natural rights, making them the ultimate standard by which the legitimacy of any government can be judged.

The Social Contract and the Formation of Society

While the state of nature is governed by natural law, it lacks the necessary mechanisms for impartial judgment and enforcement, leading to inconveniences and potential conflicts. To overcome these limitations and secure their natural rights more effectively, individuals voluntarily enter into a social contract. This contract is not a surrender of all their rights, but rather a delegation of the power to enforce the law of nature to a common authority. By agreeing to form a society and establish a government, individuals consent to be governed by the majority and relinquish their right to be judges in their own cases.

The social contract, for Locke, is a deliberate and rational act by individuals seeking to improve their condition. It signifies a transition from the state of nature to civil society. This consent is the bedrock of legitimate political authority. Unlike Hobbes, who envisioned a social contract that involved absolute submission to a sovereign, Locke's contract is conditional and based on the preservation of individual rights. The formation of society and government is thus a means to an end: the protection of life, liberty, and property for all its members.

The Purpose and Limits of Government

According to Locke, the fundamental purpose of government is the preservation of the natural rights of its citizens, particularly the right to property, which he defines broadly to include life and liberty. Government is established to provide a stable and impartial

framework for resolving disputes, punishing offenders, and protecting individuals from both internal and external threats. However, this power is not absolute. Locke emphasizes that government is a trust, established for the benefit of the people, and its authority is limited by the natural law and the terms of the social contract.

Locke argues for a separation of powers within government, primarily between the legislative and executive branches. The legislative power, he believes, is supreme, as it is the supreme law-making body. However, even the legislature is bound by natural law and cannot arbitrarily deprive individuals of their property or liberties. The executive power is responsible for executing the laws and ensuring the safety of the commonwealth. This division of powers, though not as formalized as later conceptions, was crucial in preventing the concentration of power and safeguarding individual freedoms.

The Right to Revolution

Perhaps the most radical and influential aspect of Locke's Second Treatise is his assertion of the right to revolution. When a government consistently acts against the trust placed in it by the people, systematically violates their natural rights, or attempts to enslave them, the people have the right to resist and even overthrow that government. This is not a license for anarchy, but a last resort to restore a government that will uphold the principles of natural law and protect individual liberties. The ultimate authority, Locke argues, always resides with the people.

The right to revolution is a safeguard against tyranny and a mechanism for ensuring that government remains accountable to its citizens. It underscores Locke's belief that sovereignty ultimately lies with the governed, not with the rulers. If the government breaks the social contract, it forfeits its legitimacy, and the people are free to establish a new government that will better serve their interests and protect their fundamental rights. This principle has had a profound impact on subsequent political thought and action, inspiring movements for liberty and self-determination across the globe.

Key Concepts and Themes for Worksheet Answers

When answering questions related to John Locke's Two Treatises of Government, focusing on several key concepts will ensure comprehensive and accurate responses. These themes are consistently explored in educational materials and are central to understanding Locke's profound influence on political philosophy.

Natural Law and Reason

Natural law is the cornerstone of Locke's political theory. It is an unwritten moral code discoverable by human reason, dictating that all individuals possess inherent rights and duties. Understanding that Locke sees reason as the tool through which we apprehend

natural law is crucial. Answers should emphasize that natural law exists prior to and independent of any government, setting the moral framework for both individual conduct and governmental legitimacy.

Property Rights

Locke's theory of property is particularly significant. He argues that individuals acquire property rights through mixing their labor with the natural world. This conception extends beyond mere material possessions to encompass one's own person and the fruits of one's labor. Worksheet answers should highlight how Locke views the protection of property as a primary function of government and a fundamental natural right that governments are obligated to preserve.

Consent of the Governed

The principle of consent is foundational to Locke's social contract theory. Government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed. This means that individuals voluntarily agree to form a society and submit to its laws. Explaining the different forms of consent (express and tacit) and its implications for political legitimacy is vital. Answers should clearly articulate that without consent, a government's authority is illegitimate.

Separation of Powers

While Locke did not articulate a strict separation of powers in the way Montesquieu later did, his emphasis on distinct legislative and executive functions is important. Answers should explain Locke's view that the legislative power is supreme but subordinate to natural law and the people's will, and that the executive power is responsible for enforcing laws. This division is designed to prevent tyranny and protect liberty.

Navigating Common Worksheet Questions on Locke's Two Treatises

Worksheets on Locke's Two Treatises of Government often probe specific aspects of his arguments, requiring detailed and accurate responses. Typical questions might ask students to define the state of nature, explain the purpose of the social contract, or identify the rights that individuals possess in the state of nature. For instance, a question about the differences between Locke's state of nature and Hobbes's would require a clear explanation of Locke's view of natural law and inherent rights versus Hobbes's "war of all against all."

Questions concerning property rights often require an explanation of Locke's labor theory of acquisition. Students should be prepared to discuss how individuals come to own property by mixing their labor with unowned resources, and how this right is protected by civil

society. Similarly, questions about the right to revolution should be addressed by explaining the conditions under which it is permissible for the people to alter or abolish a government that has become tyrannical. Understanding the limitations and justifications for such an act is key.

Conclusion: The Enduring Significance of Locke's Work

John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*, published in 1690, remains a cornerstone of Western political thought, offering a powerful defense of individual liberty, limited government, and the rights of the people. His theories on natural rights, the social contract, and the right to revolution have profoundly shaped democratic ideals and continue to be debated and applied in contemporary political discourse. The principles articulated by Locke provide a robust framework for understanding the legitimate basis of political authority and the essential role of government in protecting the fundamental freedoms of its citizens. Engaging with his work, and understanding the nuances of its arguments, is an essential step for anyone seeking to comprehend the foundations of modern political systems.

FAQ

Q: What is the primary purpose of John Locke's First Treatise of Government?

A: The primary purpose of John Locke's *First Treatise of Government* is to refute Sir Robert Filmer's arguments in *Patriarcha*, which defended the Divine Right of Kings and patriarchal absolute monarchy. Locke systematically deconstructs Filmer's claims about Adam's divinely granted authority and its hereditary succession to kings, aiming to dismantle the philosophical basis for absolute, unchallengeable royal power.

Q: How does John Locke define the "state of nature" in his Second Treatise, and how does it differ from Thomas Hobbes's conception?

A: In his *Second Treatise*, Locke defines the "state of nature" as a condition of perfect freedom and equality, governed by the law of nature (reason). Unlike Hobbes, who saw it as a "war of all against all," Locke viewed the state of nature as generally peaceful, where individuals possess natural rights to life, liberty, and property. The inconveniences of the state of nature, such as the lack of an impartial judge, lead individuals to form civil society.

Q: What are natural rights according to John Locke, and

why are they so important in his political philosophy?

A: According to John Locke, natural rights are inherent, inalienable rights possessed by all individuals from birth, discoverable through reason. The most prominent are the rights to life, liberty, and property. They are crucial because Locke argues that the primary purpose of government is to protect these pre-existing natural rights, and any government that fails to do so forfeits its legitimacy.

Q: Explain Locke's concept of the social contract and how it leads to the formation of civil society.

A: Locke's social contract is a voluntary agreement among individuals to leave the state of nature and form a civil society and government. By consenting, individuals delegate their power to enforce the law of nature to a common authority, thereby gaining a more secure protection for their natural rights. This contract establishes a government based on the consent of the governed.

Q: What is John Locke's justification for the right to revolution, and under what circumstances is it permissible?

A: John Locke justifies the right to revolution as a last resort when a government consistently acts contrary to the trust placed in it by the people, systematically violates their natural rights, or attempts to enslave them. It is permissible when the government becomes tyrannical and breaks the social contract, at which point the people have the right to resist and establish a new government that will protect their liberties.

Q: How does John Locke's theory of property influence his ideas about government?

A: John Locke's theory of property, which asserts that individuals acquire property rights by mixing their labor with natural resources, is fundamental to his ideas about government. He posits that the protection of property (broadly defined to include life and liberty) is one of the primary reasons for forming a government. Therefore, a government's legitimacy is intrinsically linked to its ability to safeguard these property rights.

Q: What role does consent play in John Locke's theory of legitimate government?

A: Consent is the absolute cornerstone of John Locke's theory of legitimate government. He argues that political authority is not divinely ordained or inherent in lineage but is derived from the consent of the governed. Individuals voluntarily agree to be ruled, thereby granting the government its legitimate power to make and enforce laws for the common good.

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