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Locke: Political Writings (Hackett Classics)



Synopsis

John Locke's Second Treatise of Government (c. 1681) is perhaps the key founding liberal text. A Letter Concerning Toleration, written in 1685 (a year when a Catholic monarch came to the throne of England and Louis XVI unleashed a reign of terror against Protestants in France), is a classic defense of religious freedom. Yet many of Locke's other writings--not least the Constitutions of Carolina, which he helped draft--are almost defiantly anti-liberal in outlook. This comprehensive collection brings together the main published works (excluding polemical attacks on other people's views) with the most important surviving evidence from among Locke's papers relating to his political philosophy. David Wootton's wide-ranging and scholarly Introduction sets the writings in the context of their time, examines Locke's developing ideas and unorthodox Christianity, and analyzes his main arguments. The result is the first fully rounded picture of Locke's political thought in his own words.

Book Information

Series: Hackett Classics

Paperback: 488 pages

Publisher: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.; UK ed. edition (March 15, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0872206769

ISBN-13: 978-0872206762

Product Dimensions: 1.2 x 5.5 x 12.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars 9 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #30,226 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #61 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Modern #85 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Political #100 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Philosophy > History & Surveys

Customer Reviews

David Wootton is Anniversary Professor of History, University of York. His translations of Machiavelli (The Prince and Selected Political Writings), Thomas More (Utopia), and Voltaire (Candide and Related Texts) are also published by Hackett Publishing Company.

Another stepping stone book to have around if you're into political science!

Excellent compilation of John Locke's political writings. I enjoyed re-reading Locke's classic liberal political philosophy and grappling with its significance on American Political Thought..

As a student, I am using this text for a political science class where our professor is constantly referencing the page numbers of the text. After checking Google, it seemed that supported real page numbers, but apparently this book does not have them. This should have been made more clear before I purchased the ebook, as I'm now stuck with a product that I am not able to return and is useless to me.

After having read so much of how John Locke influenced our Founding Fathers, I found this very difficult to read. Frankly, I could get through less than half. It just did not seem to get to the point; talked in circles and almost seemed to avoid getting down to what I considered the "nittygritty". I am not sure exactly what I was looking for, but this book did not answer my questions.

The book was interesting, but the author defiantly likes to contradict himself and jump around a lot which makes it a harder book to keep interested in and actually understand. I used sparknotes to help me interpret exactly what the author was talking about. I liked reading about the ideas that helped shape our Declaration of Independence.

Once I became used to the very long sentences I found this book a delight. In 21st century England we have long been used to religion being confined to the personal sphere, notwithstanding the Lords Spiritual, the Queen as Head of the Church and a tiny, disaffected minority that would see our country take its place in a Global Caliphate. In both his Treatises on Government, as well as in his Essay on Toleration, Locke seeks to demolish many barriers, then still standing, against freedom of custom in forms of worship and freedom of conscience in belief. Such was the atmosphere in the late 17th century. The place of God in our Constitution had been a crucial issue in the blood soaked Civil War which had been the backdrop to Locke's childhood. He was sixteen years old when the Prot./Cat. Thirty Years War drew to a close. Locke's burial of the notion of the divine right of kings, and his acknowledgement that rulers can only rule legitimately with their people's consent may make him sound like a pioneer of liberalism, or even a visionary of our modern age. He is, however, very much a man of his time. Indeed that is the attraction of this book. The comments of a 17th century man from a 17th century perspective bring the period to life in a way that would tax the skills of a 21st century historian. Consciously or no, historians will have their own agenda. 'Liberal' is a

relative term. Locke would outlaw atheists; he was convinced that morality was impossible without a belief on God. 'Mahomedans', whose loyalty would, with their essentially political faith, be to the Ottoman Sultan and Caliph, could not possibly be subjects of the English crown. Regarding the early development of human societies, politics and nations, Locke was writing prior to the development of anthropology and sociology, and 200 years before Darwin wrote 'The Descent of Man'. His conjectures, therefore, on primitive societies, appear, quite naturally 'primitive'. In other ways Locke appears prescient. One hundred years before Adam Smith he attempts an explanation of the laws of supply and demand. 200 years before Marx he outlines his own 'labour theory of value'. He proposes what we would now call 'workhouses' as a remedy for beggary and paupery. His grand scheme for eradicating poverty might read, at first sight, like an early version of Thomas Paine's 'Rights of Man'. Unlike Paine, however, who envisioned a state education system providing universal literacy, Locke would have the poor children set to work in the textile industry. And finally; for South Carolina he proposed a constitution definitely aristocratic, if not feudal, and for England he recommends that the Act of Queen Elizabeth's day whereby unlicensed beggars would have their ears cut off, should be enforced with full rigour. The seeds of modern England can be seen in this selection of Locke's writings, but whatever his influence, our country has changed in ways that Locke would find inconceivable.

A very nice gathering of the works of the, widely acknowledged, father of modern liberalism. Some of Locke's writings might lead the reader to wonder about this. Overall, a great read.

This compilation of Locke's political writings not only contains his famed second treatise, but also supplementary essays supporting his views and espousing other particulars. The book is a must for any one interested in political philosophy in the least simply because most of the ideas espoused were incorporated into the foundation of our country. The essays set up Locke's basic democratic theories and his version of social contract society. The reading is mildly technical and archaic, but not too bad. An excellent start to any one interested in philosophy

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