

POLITICAL & SOCIAL THOUGHT

Justifying Private Property

Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What premises, assumptions, reasons, evidence, and other important considerations lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, it is *information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support and justify accepting the author's conclusions as opposed to other ones.

Reading

Locke, J. (2008, March). *Second Treatise of Government* (J. Bennett, Trans.). Early Modern Texts. Retrieved December 17, 2018, from <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/locke1689a.pdf>. (Original work from 1689.)
(Excerpts are from Chapter 5.)

Questions

1. John Locke would disagree with both Thomas Hobbes and John Stuart Mill about private property. Recall that Hobbes denies a natural right to private property, arguing that private property is *merely conventional*, created by the state. Mill, meanwhile, argues that private property is *only instrumentally valuable* insofar as it is needed to promote greater happiness or social utility.

Locke, however, goes to great lengths, and uses a lot of examples, to defend a natural and intrinsic right to private property. In a clear rejection of Hobbes, Locke argues that in the state of nature there are still property rights.

What are Locke's arguments that there is a natural right to take something previously available to everyone and making it one's own private property? What conditions does Locke specify for a person to rightfully do so?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses (unless you miss or are late to class, and must then submit a written reading question review).

You do need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting. You may, during the following class, be randomly selected to present answers to these if selected to do so for a verbal reading question review.