

POLITICAL & SOCIAL THOUGHT

Justifying & Legitimizing Civil Society

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 Chapters 7–9, 11, and 13.)

Questions

1. According to John Locke, how is civil society different from the state of nature? What does a person gain and lose by entering into civil society with others? What is the purpose or end of civil society? Ultimately, how does this all come together to justify the existence of the state?
2. Even though Locke provides an argument justifying the state, this does not necessarily make it legitimate for the state to exert its immense power over a person. What else does Locke believe must happen before the exercise of power by the state is legitimate?
3. Voting and majority rule play a large part for making decisions in a Lockean state. Does this mean that minorities will be tyrannized by the majority?
4. Recall that Thomas Hobbes argues that the sovereign ruler of the state must have a significant amount of power. Does Locke's theory agree with that?

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.