

## John Locke Two Treatises of Government, 1690



By Herman Verelst, 1689  
<http://www.npg.org.uk/live/search/portrait.asp?LinkID=mp02773&No=2&role=sit>

- Paternal power is not the same as political power.
- Political power is not derived from inheritance.

Reading carefully also involves

- following—and sometimes ► ferreting out—the implications of Locke's arguments.

Some implications that we see would not have been seen by contemporary readers (or by Locke himself)

- because
- because

### Explicit & Implicit Arguments

•*King Lear* dramatizes the inadequacy of traditional social structures—marked by deference—to hold the social group together.

•*King Lear* delineates the inadequacy of Christian principles—charity and forgiveness—to hold the social group together.

(Parenthetically: *King Lear* is not a “reflection” of contemporary practices.)

► *The play* does not make these claims. Both theses concern what the play implies.

► Literary works seldom make explicit arguments.

► *Why is this distinction important?*

### A turbulent political period

Locke was born in 1632, the 7th year of the reign of Charles I.  
(See Stuart chart on “Weekly Calendar” of Humanities Core site.)

► Beginning when Locke was about 10, there was a civil war—the two sides were the Royalists (loyal to King Charles I) and the Parliamentarians (Presbyterians and other dissenters, many loosely identified as Puritan).

► Locke's family was Puritan (his father served in the Parliamentary army), but Locke went to Westminster School, where the headmaster was decidedly Royalist.

► The king was captured and held; all compromise failed; and the king was tried in a specially constructed court, condemned to death, and beheaded on January 31, 1649.

In *The Two Treatises*, Locke makes explicit arguments.

•Paternal power is not the same as political power.

•Political power is not derived from inheritance.

Much of what we will do in today's lecture will be identifying Locke's arguments and his strategies for making those arguments persuasive.

### Trial of King Charles I

From Norton Topics Online:  
<http://www.wvnorton.com/nael/17century/topic%5F3/trial.htm>

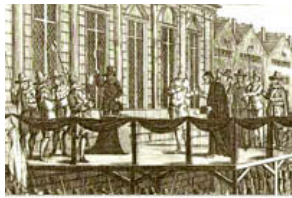
From *King Charles his Tryal at the High Court of Justice* (London, 1650); John Nalson, *A True Copy of the Journal of the High Court of Justice for the Tryal of K. Charles* (London, 1684); and John Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, 8 vols. (London 1721–22), Vol. 7. Printed in *The Trial of Charles I: A Documentary History*, David Lagomarsino and Charles T. Wood, editors, © 1989 by the Trustees of Dartmouth College, by permission [to Norton] of University Press of New England.



Source of image: <http://www.britannia.com/history/londonhistory/stolon.html>

#### THE EXECUTION OF CHARLES I

"I go from a corruptible to an incorruptible crown, where no disturbances can be." Charles I on the scaffold.



Execution of Charles I

On the morning when Charles I was beheaded, Locke was 17 and at school where he was "within earshot of the awe-stricken crowd" (Laslett, 17).

#### Historical information: A family--state problem

Charles II (1660-1685) had many illegitimate but no legitimate children.

His brother James, next in line to inherit the throne, was Roman Catholic. (James had two Protestant daughters--Mary & Anne--by his first marriage but was now married to a Catholic and might, therefore, produce a Catholic heir as, in fact, he later did.)

A powerful political group--led by the Earl of Shaftesbury, for whom Locke worked--tried to pass an act of Exclusion in Parliament in order to exclude James from the throne, favoring instead the Duke of Monmouth, illegitimate and much loved son of Charles II.

#### Charles I - Christian martyr (reigned 1625-49) (lived 1600-1649)

He became an icon of the martyred king.

- Charles I in three positions - multiple portrait by Sir Anthony Van Dyck (1599-1641). © Royal Collection.



Source of image:  
<http://www.royal.gov.uk/history/stuart.htm>

After the restoration, there was a special service in the Church of England commemorating his death. This service was used every January 30 until the mid-19th century.

The legend about this painting: Bernini "exclaimed that he had never seen a portrait whose countenance showed so much greatness and such marks of sadness: the man who was so strongly characterized and whose dejection was so visible was doomed to be unfortunate."

(Qtd. Richard Ollard, *The Image of the King*, p. 25.)

The Exclusion Act failed, defeated by the political savvy of Charles II.

The Earl of Shaftesbury, Locke's patron, spent some time in the Tower (prison) and then went into exile.

Locke, too, because of his close association with Shaftesbury went into exile.

The *Two Treatises* is an Exclusion Crisis document. It was written to justify (a) the exclusion of James from the throne and (b) the doctrine of "consent" as the basis of political power—but it was not published. And part of it was lost in all the maneuvers that preceded Locke's exile.

If Christian religious principles seemed inadequate to hold the social group together in *Lear*, religious views could, at Locke's time and in his view, be positively dangerous to the stability of government—and therefore dangerous to what we are calling human "associations."

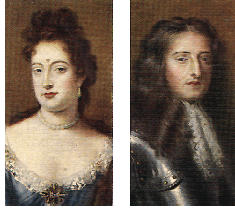
*Two Treatises* was published in 1690, just after what is called the "Glorious Revolution."

What happened was this:

**The Glorious Revolution brought William & Mary to the throne.**

[http://www.camelotintl.com/heritage/rulers/mary\\_ii.html](http://www.camelotintl.com/heritage/rulers/mary_ii.html)

- William III & Mary II assumed the throne of England in 1689.
- Locke says he hopes these discourses "are sufficient to establish the throne of our great restorer, our present King William--to make good his title in the consent of the people" (Preface, 137).



Mary & William

Reading Locke (not always easy)

Political philosophy & political tract (I)

"... this strange kind of domineering Phantom, called the *Fatherhood*, which whoever could catch, presently got Empire, and unlimited absolute Power" (Ch. II, §6, pp. 145).

The italics represent quotation from Filmer's *Patriarcha*. What may appear to be simple description here is actually Locke's way of exposing Filmer to ridicule merely by quoting him.

Filmer's work becomes entrapped in Locke's rhetoric.

Locke's job: Destroy Filmer's thesis justifying absolutism and establish his own thesis elaborating "consent" as the bedrock of legitimate and effective political power.

James II. William III and Mary II.

James II



Mary



William



Source of images: <http://www.britannia.com/history/monarchs/mon50.html> and <http://www.britannia.com/history/monarchs/mon51.html>

Reading Locke (not always easy)

Political philosophy & political tract (II)

•Destroying Filmer (1): What's in a name? "Sir Robert Filmer" (I, §4), Sir R.F. (I, §5), "our Author" (II, §7), "our A" (V, §44), and "our A-----" (V, §45). , (I, §4)

•Destroying Filmer (2): summary. (II, I §1, p. )

What had been a radical political document justifying the exclusion of an hereditary successor became a document justifying the removal and replacement of the same person.

Book II was probably written first, Book I afterward to answer the posthumous publication of Filmer's *Patriarcha*. Material was added for its publication in 1690 in its new role, as Locke states, "to establish the throne of our great restorer, our present King William--to make good his title in the consent of the people" (Preface, 137).

Locke's main points--what the *Two Treatises* does:

**Relentlessly severs the connection between family and state as justification for political power.**

Locates the title to kingship in "the consent of the people."

Delineates a model for the state that rests on a "compact" or on "trust."

Severing the connection between the power of husbands and the power of kings: How does Locke do it?

**PROPERTY:** How does property move from "common" to "private"?  
**What allows appropriation?**  
(*Treatise II, V, §25 ff, pp. 285 ff.*)

"[E]very Man has a *Property* in his own *Person*. This no Body has any Right to but himself. The *Labour* of his Body, and the *Work* of his Hands, we may say, are properly his." § 26

- Mixture of his labor with object in the State of Nature makes that object his. Pick up an acorn or an apple and the effort you put into it makes it yours. § 27
- What about the grass my horse bites? § 28
- Cultivation of the land gives it to the cultivator. § 32.
- The invention of money altered appropriation. § 36
- The world was not given to Adam but to all in common. § 39

Severing the connection between political and paternal power: How does Locke do it?  
Why are mothers important?

Why is property important to Locke's thinking and what difference does money make?

What about the connection between property and political power? Does it survive?

What is the "state of nature"? Do we find "unaccommodated" man there?

Why would anyone want to leave the state of nature?

A question for further thinking: What is  
"social cement" in *The Two Treatises*?