

2013

Ancients, Moderns, and Americans: The Case of Tyranny

Alexandria LaRose

Follow this and additional works at: http://vc.bridgew.edu/undergrad_rev



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

LaRose, Alexandria (2013). Ancients, Moderns, and Americans: The Case of Tyranny. *Undergraduate Review*, 9, 75-81.

Available at: http://vc.bridgew.edu/undergrad_rev/vol9/iss1/17

Ancients, Moderns, and Americans: The Case of Tyranny

ALEXANDRIA LAROSE



Alexandria LaRose is a senior majoring in Communication Studies and Political Science. She

completed this research with Dr. Barkalow of the Political Science department as part of the Summer ATP research grant. In the fall of 2013, Alexandria will begin a master's program in Mass Communications.

American political thought's reliance on modern, liberal thinking raises questions about its ability to fully and properly understand tyranny. According to Leo Strauss (2000), this lack of understanding, or total misunderstanding, stems from America's failure to return to the political thought of the ancients. Ancient philosophy provides one with the normative criteria by which it becomes possible to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy regimes. This project assesses the argument of Strauss through a textual analysis of Locke's Second Treatise and The Declaration of Independence. The analysis conducted finds no evidence to suggest that American political thought provides an understanding of tyranny substantive enough to allow us to identify tyranny when confronted by it. Instead, we must look outside of the American political tradition, to Tocqueville's Democracy in America, for an understanding of tyranny that is characterized by both substantive and procedural components.

Central to American political discourse is the concept of tyranny. From the Pilgrims' desire to escape religious persecution in England to President George W. Bush's use of tyranny to describe the attacks of 11 September 2001, tyranny continues to occupy a central place in America's political vocabulary. In 2005 Democratic Senator Russell Feingold used the term to describe President Bush's decision to have the NSA listen to international calls placed within the United States. He states, "I tell you, he's President George Bush, not King George Bush. This is not the system of government we have and that we fought for" (ABC, 2005). More recently, Representative Joe Walsh called President Obama a tyrant. He argues that Obama's decision to change the immigration policy in order to prevent the deportation of undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children was a tyrannical act. Walsh said, "I was on one radio station and I said, 'My god he's a tyrant.' I don't know what else you call him. I don't want to give him that credit because I don't think he's smart enough" (Siddiqui, 2012).

Despite the continued use of the word, there is reason to believe that there is a basic misunderstanding, or total lack of understanding, of tyranny. Leo Strauss (2000, 22-23) writes:

The analysis of tyranny that was made by the first political scientists was so clear, so comprehensive, and so unforgettably expressed that it was remembered and understood by generations, which did not have

any direct experience of actual tyranny. On the other hand, when we are brought face-to-face with tyranny—with a kind of tyranny that surpasses the boldest imagination of the most powerful thinkers of the past—our political science failed to recognize it.

The reason for this, according to Strauss, lies in a fundamental distinction between ancient and modern understandings of tyranny. Aristotle treats tyranny as a deviation from monarchy, and from this one may infer that a tyrant is little more than a monarch who rules with an eye to his private advantage instead of the public good (*Politics* 1259a 15-18). In contrast, modern tyranny rejects the distinction between king and tyrant and the normative evaluation that informs this distinction. In rejecting the ancient distinction, philosophers remove from political theory the distinction between healthy and unhealthy regimes. In other words, they remove the normative foundation that allows one to comprehensively speak to why tyranny is bad. If Strauss is correct, we can only fully understand tyranny by returning to modern political thought the politics of the ancients due to the lack of a comprehensive understanding of tyranny provided by moderns. To the extent that Strauss is correct, his argument presents a problem for American political thinking on tyranny given the centrality of the political ideas shaping our founding documents to .

This essay begins by examining the nature of the ancient and modern tyranny distinction drawn by Strauss. The next section provides an analysis of tyranny as defined by Locke in *Second Treatise of Government*. This and the third section, focusing on *The Declaration of Independence*, shows how the American Revolutionaries drew on Locke in developing their understanding of tyranny. The final section examines Tocqueville's depiction of majority tyranny in America, as well as his solution to the problem. The American Founders rely on a modern understanding of tyranny. Therefore, American political thought does not provide a response to Strauss' (2000) charge that modern political thought fails to provide a comprehensive understanding of tyranny. However, Tocqueville offers a response to Strauss' charge. Tocqueville's emphasis on mores helps to provide standards of political morality that inform his understanding of majority tyranny; therefore, Tocqueville offers a definition of tyranny that is simultaneously ancient and modern.

Strauss on Tyranny and Natural Right

Strauss draws a distinction between ancient and modern tyranny. The key to this distinction, according to Strauss, is that ancient tyranny is grounded on a political morality absent in the modern understanding of politics. Consequently, modern political theory has difficulty determining which governments

are tyrannical and which are not (Strauss 2000). The key to understanding the difference between ancient and modern tyranny can be found in Strauss' distinction between ancient and modern natural right.

The ancient understanding of natural right is grounded on a teleological viewpoint.¹ Strauss states, "all natural beings have an natural end, a natural destiny, which determines what kind of operation is good for them. In the case of man, reason is required for discerning these operations: reason determines what is by natural right with ultimate regard to man's natural end" (Strauss 1953, 7). Individuals are guided by natural standards in order to live their lives virtuously and complete virtuous acts. Similarly, ancient governments are founded on the same natural standards that facilitate the habituation of citizens into working for the betterment of the city. Aristotle emphasizes the importance of habituating citizens into virtuous behaviors at an early age as early habituation instills in individuals a sense of obligation, or duty, to their city as well as predisposes them to the right action (*Ethics*, 1103a 20). Ancient republican views of virtue put the good of the city above the good of the individuals, the early habituation into these values allows for individuals to act for the betterment of the city.

Moderns view the city as an artificial construct; therefore there is no natural political morality, which can be used to evaluate the regime. Strauss (1999, 111) argues, "The city is a multitude of human beings who are united not by nature but by convention" who come together to protect their common interests. While ancient natural right focuses on virtue and good citizenship, modern natural right is concerned with securing and enjoying natural rights. Despite the commonality between ancient and modern thought on natural right, moderns view the common good in fundamentally different terms than ancients. Without the strong attachment to common good, moderns have no sense of duty to the city; instead they argue that natural standards are located within the individual. The good comes to be determined by each individual, consequently, the good too becomes a relative term that is the polar opposite of a single, natural standard. Individuals no longer need to look to natural standards for guidance and morality, instead the good can be determined by each individual. This is contrary to the ancient belief that decisions are set by natural standards. Moderns argue that government should work towards the protection and enjoyment rights for the individual. By placing the natural standards within the individuals, natural rights become based on the individuals' rights, instead of the common good.

According to Strauss, Locke is emblematic of the modern change in how natural right is understood. While Locke initially appears to provide a traditional account, closer inspection

shows how radical Locke's teaching really is. The shift from emphasizing duties to securing and enjoying a revised understanding of natural right causes individual egos to "become the center and origin of the moral world," according to Strauss (2000, 248). Strauss shows the change by looking into Locke's teaching on property. Locke argues that the work a man puts into objects is what gives the object value (§37).² Strauss reads Locke's teaching with regard to property as resulting in hedonism. This happens because individuals stop looking to natural standards of virtue for pleasure and start collecting items as the source of their happiness. Happiness is no longer found in adhering to natural standards, but in the indulgence of our physical desires. For moderns, there is no longer a place for a morality that is not self-authored. The change in where value lies causes a change in philosophy, into a world of convention instead of a world of nature, meaning that conventional things such as money have become more important than natural standards of morality.

Locke on Tyranny

Locke creates a clear distinction between usurpation and a tyrannical government. He writes, "[a] usurpation is the exercise of power which another hath a right to, so tyranny is the exercise of power beyond right, which nobody can have a right to" (§199). To understand the nature of this distinction, it is useful to consider Locke's thoughts on slavery. Locke defines slavery as, "... nothing else but the state of war continued, between a lawful conqueror and a captive" (§23).³ In slavery, individuals are given arbitrary power over the lives of other people. A slave is no longer able to act as an agent for their own lives, he/she no longer possesses the freedom to direct their own lives, due to the giving up arbitrary power of their lives to another person. Governments become tyrannical when they execute arbitrary power over its citizen while working with an eye to private interests instead of the common good. Locke states, "[if the government is beyond its limits, the government becomes tyrannical]" (§199). Natural rights limit governmental political power. When government goes beyond these set limits the political power it acquires power that they have no right to. No one has the right or power to use the power they acquire for their private good instead of for the common good; when this happens, tyranny occurs (§199).

Tyranny occurs when a ruler goes above and beyond the laws. Locke states, "[w]here law ends, tyranny begins" (§202). He argues that no one can strip citizens of their rights: "whosoever in authority exceeds the power given him by the law, and makes use of the force he has under his command to compass that upon the subject which the law allows not, ceases in that to be a magistrate, and acting without authority may be opposed, as any other man who by force invades the right of

another" (§202). Laws are one of the ways that governments protect rights, particularly the right to own and enjoy property. Locke states, "for in governments, the laws regulate the right of property, and the possession of land is determined by positive constitutions" (§50). Laws are also created as a way to limit the power of government and create stability. Stability is needed, "... to preserve his property, that is, his life, liberty and estate, against the injuries and attempts of other men; but to judge of, and punish the breaches of that law in others" (§87). Consequently, when these laws are breached by the government it acts arbitrarily. In the state of nature, stability is not provided causing the problem of uncertainty. The laws provide agreed upon rules as to what one can and cannot do, which is not a characteristic of the state of nature.

When individuals enter into a political society they restrict their own rights and the power to punish others, in return the government protects them. Individuals entering into society are looking to gain security. In the state of nature there are no impartial judges or established laws by which society is governed by (§125-126). For Locke, governments are created to secure the natural rights of individuals. Men are willing to give up freedoms that they possess in the state of nature to secure and enjoy their natural rights, specifically their rights to life, liberty and property (§87, §131). A good government, according to Locke provides stability. The uncertainty felt in the state of nature is caused by the right for a party to take from another just because they can in a state of nature until peace is found between the two parties (§20). An impartial judge, government, establishes laws to protect and allow for the enjoyment of rights. Another way that governments secure rights is through laws. Having laws created which prevent injury and destruction also creates rules that are followed by citizens. These laws create stability by making rules to be followed by all citizens as well as providing an independent body to solve disputes.

When government no longer protects the rights of the people it governs and allows for their enjoyment of these rights, then the majority has a right to dissolve the government. Locke writes, "the people have a right to act as supreme, and continue the legislative in themselves; or erect a new form, or under the old form place it in new hands, as they think good" (§243). The importance of majority rule can be found in Locke's depiction of the legislative body. Where Locke speaks of legislative power he explicitly mentions that it is governed by majority rule.

He states that changes can only be made with the support of a majority of the governed. This consent needs to be given by either the people themselves or by representatives that the governed have chosen to give consent for them (§140). Locke

believes that if a law inflicts harm upon another citizen it is an unjust law (§ 202). The citizens then have the right to try and alter the government. If the acts of tyranny are perpetrated against the majority of citizens and the majority decides to alter the government, this will happen because “in such cases as the precedent and consequences seem to threaten all, and they are persuaded in their consciences that their laws, and with them, their estates, liberties, and lives are in danger” (§ 209). The majority of the people have to give consent to any changes made in order for the dissolution of government to happen.

American Revolutionaries on Tyranny

The Declaration of Independence was written by Jefferson in order to prevent tyranny in America. He states, “The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States” (*Declaration*). Jefferson argues throughout the document that, because of the presence of tyranny in America, there is a justification for politically breaking away from England and becoming the United States. In doing so, Jefferson must show that the King’s rule in America is illegitimate. On both counts, Jefferson follows the example of Locke.

Jefferson follows Locke’s emphasis on the purpose of legitimate government is to secure natural rights. Jefferson argues in *The Declaration of Independence* that men are all born with inalienable rights: “[w]e hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” (*Declaration*). The idea of rights to life, liberty, and happiness can be found in other documents.⁴ The Virginia Bill of Rights of 1776 states, “That all men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society . . . namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.” Jefferson and the revolutionaries argue for the enjoyment of rights, the same as Locke. Similar to Locke, Jefferson argues that legitimate government becomes tyrannical when it abuses and usurps power. Jefferson more explicitly adds an injury component to tyranny which Locke does not explicitly depict. Jefferson writes, “. . . when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism” (*Declaration*). *The Declaration* also states, “[t]he history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States” (*Declaration*). Thus, according to Jefferson, tyranny is a function

of the abuse of power, the usurpation of political power, and injury.

An abuse of power occurs when a leader uses their political power to benefit their private interests instead of the common good. This King abuses the power he has been given by undermining the rule of law. According to Jefferson, the King, “. . . has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them” (*Declaration*). The King only passed laws which were beneficial to himself, instead of passing laws which were for the common good. He managed this by stopping the legislative body from passing laws. Not only did the King refuse laws but he also undermines the consent of citizens. Jefferson argues in *The Declaration* for a Lockean understanding of consent from the citizens. Gathering the legislative body in places “unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records” in order to prevent the legislative body being able to consent to laws (*Declaration*). Consenting to the government is a requirement for legitimate government according to Locke. He also dissolves the legislative bodies when they disagree with his abuse of the rights of citizens. This means that Americans were not able to give the consent needed to make the government legitimate. Nowhere is this more important than in they cry “no taxation without representation.” Jefferson and other revolutionaries argue for the governed to be able to give express consent to their government. They required government to gain consent from the governed in order to be legitimate.

Jefferson also argues that British control over the colonies is illegitimate because the monarch usurps political power. Jefferson has the same understanding of usurpation as Locke; they argue that usurpation is when an individual uses power they do not have a right to (§199). In *The Declaration*, Jefferson states that the King takes power from other branches of government that he has no political right to. An example of this is when the King assumes the legislative powers of regulating trade with different parts of the world, as well as imposing taxes (*Declaration*). Both of these are powers of parliament that the King has no right to. The King of England also usurps natural rights from the people. He denies citizens their right to a jury trial of his/her peers. Instead, he transports people overseas to be tried on false charges (*Declaration*).

American Revolutionaries petitioned the King of Britain to try and stop the oppression of America; however, they were still faced with repeated injuries even after petitioning for change (*Declaration*). The King of England hindered America’s ability to provide by plundering “our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt

our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people” (*Declaration*). By damaging property and taking the lives of citizens, the King is no longer protecting the natural rights that American revolutionaries argued for, the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The King also put an undue burden upon Americans to keep rebuilding their lives in order to pursue happiness. Destroying property and slaughtering individuals causes the governed to no longer receive enjoyment from their rights, thus removing their tacit consent.⁵ Another injury perpetrated by the King was declaring war against American citizens. After declaring war, mercenaries were sent to carry out atrocities on Americans. *The Declaration* reads: “He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation, and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & Perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation” (*Declaration*). Through these acts the king has endangered the peace, tranquility, property, and the common good of the United States. Which wasn’t yet established.

When presented with tyranny, the *Declaration* states, “That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness” (*Declaration*). Upon close analysis one can see that the revolutionaries’ desire to overthrow governments which are not working for the good of the people is built on Locke’s understanding of when to governments should be dissolved. For both Locke, and the American Revolutionaries, government can be overthrown but a majority consensus has to occur before this can happen. When withdrawing from government, the governed have the right to state the problems, they are having with the government (*Declaration*). If the majority of the citizens agree, stating problems can lead to the changing or removal of the governmental structure they are currently living under. Jefferson writes, “it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security” (*Declaration*).

The similarity between the American Revolutionaries and Locke suggest that the American Revolutionaries’ understanding of tyranny is modern and not ancient, in their common emphasis on the nature and purpose of legitimate government. America draws on its own political tradition in order to employ the standards of political morality needed to create the substantive understanding of tyranny. Having a modern understanding raises questions about America’s ability to recognize tyranny when it occurs (Strauss 1953, 200). Strauss argues that the normative quality lacking in modern politics is what allows

tyranny to be recognized. Tocqueville provides for this normative evaluation through his understanding of majority tyranny. If America wants to find the principals of political morality needed, then we need to look to Tocqueville for answers instead of our founding documents.

Tocqueville on Tyranny

Tocqueville argues that the threat of tyranny and despotism are damaging to governments with one ruler but are even more damaging to governments that are ruled by majority. He writes, “Under the absolute government of one alone, despotism struck the body crudely, so as to reach the soul; and the soul, escaping from those blows, rose gloriously above it; but in democratic republics, tyranny does not proceed in this way; it leaves the body and goes straight for the soul” (*Democracy*, 244).⁶ For Locke and the American Revolutionaries tyranny affects the body, individuals are restricted from basic needs, such as food and material items. Tyranny of the soul debars the soul, causing the dehumanizing aspects of tyranny, such as isolation from society. In majority tyranny one is still able to keep their freedoms and their own opinions. However, when an individual disagrees with the majority opinion they lose connections with society. Majority tyranny is especially damaging due to its psychological effects on individuals. According to Tocqueville, when majority opinion is still being formulated the lines of communication are open and individuals can speak their thoughts freely. However, when majority decision is formulated, individuals no longer have the ability to speak their minds when it goes against majority opinion” (*Democracy*, 244). Tocqueville argues that this is because, “In America the majority draws a formidable circle around thought. Inside those limits, the writer is free; but unhappiness awaits him if he dares to leave them” (*Democracy*, 244). These boundaries drawn around ideas create a negative psychological effect on individuals. Under a majority tyranny, thoughts become restricted due to a need to conform: “You are not free to think as I do; your life, good goods, everything remains to you; but from this day on, you are a stranger to us. You shall keep your privileges in the city, but they will become useless to you” (*Democracy*, 244). People become less willing to speak out against the majority due as doing so has consequences. Speaking out against the majority also has political implications: “A political career is closed to him: he has offended the only power that has the capacity to open it up. Everything is refused him, even glory” (*Democracy*, 244). Due to the need to conform one can no longer be who they are or who they want to be. Tocqueville argues that the conformity required by majority tyranny is what makes it more dangerous than the tyranny of a single individual. Tocqueville provides a depiction and understanding of tyranny that goes beyond the rights centered understandings by Locke and *The Declaration*. Tocqueville provides for norma-

tive understanding of good versus bad governments, which can also be found in the ancient understanding of politics.

Tocqueville's solution to majority tyranny is twofold, and consists of an institutional and a non-institutional component. Institutionally, Tocqueville follows the recommendation of the authors of *The Federalist* while placing special importance on the role of an independent judiciary. Tocqueville follows Publius' argument for the separation of powers and a system of checks and balances as well as the benefits of the extended republic (*Democracy*, 260). A major difference between Tocqueville and Publius is Tocqueville explicitly argues for trial by jury (*Democracy*, 260). Tocqueville argues that the jury is a political institution that possesses a great deal of influence on the public: "it would narrow one's thought singularly to limit oneself to viewing the jury as a judicial institution; for, it exerts a greater influence on the fate of cases, it exerts a much greater one still on the destinies of society" (*Democracy*, 260). With a jury, a set number of citizens are temporarily given the right to judge. Tocqueville writes that the trial by jury works to combat tyranny because it teaches people equity and serves to enlighten the public (*Democracy*, 260).

Non-institutionally, Tocqueville believes that freedom of religion, self-interest well understood, and mores will prevent majority tyranny from forming in the United States. Freedom of religion combats majority tyranny by providing a bonding experience, causing people to become close with members of the community (*Democracy*, 280). Further religious lessons teach followers moral boundaries. ". . . At the same time that the law permits the American people to do something, religion prevents them from conceiving everything and forbids them to dare everything" (*Democracy*, 280). Religion does not grant individuals freedoms, the government does. However, religion helps to facilitate how individuals use their freedoms.

Tocqueville's understanding of mores provides for an understanding of political morality missing in Locke and the thought of the American Revolutionaries. Mores cause people to become more sensitive to other's needs in a democracy. In situations where equality has more of a presence, compassion increases because individuals are better able to imagine themselves having similar problems. According to Tocqueville, Americans are selfish individuals but are open to being compassionate to others (*Democracy*, 538). When equality is present, "one does not see them inflict useless evils, and when they can relieve the sorrows of another without denying themselves much, they take pleasure in doing it..." (*Democracy*, 538). Mores are also important in shaping society through the promotion of proper values. Similarly to Aristotle, education is greatly important to Tocqueville.

Tocqueville argues that self-interest well understood is grounded on mores. The doctrine of self-interest well understood suggests "little sacrifices each day; by itself it cannot make a man virtuous; but if forms a multitude of citizens who are regulated, temperate, moderate, farsighted, masters of themselves" (*Democracy*, 502). Self-interest well understood causes individuals to become more virtuous through habituation. Doing small acts to help others will become a habit if done frequently enough. The doctrine works to even out the virtue in a society. It causes less extraordinary acts of virtue to happen but it raises the virtue of individuals who are lacking it. Self-interest well understood combats the egoism that characterizes Locke's political thinking. According to Tocqueville, self-interest well understood is "[m]arvelously accommodating to the weaknesses of men, it obtains a great empire with ease, and preserves it with out difficulty because it turns personal interest against itself..." (*Democracy*, 502).

Conclusion

While Tocqueville's analysis of majority tyranny offers a response to the challenge of Strauss, the same cannot be said for the political thought of the American Revolution. One does not find in *The Declaration* a standard of political morality that matches those that characterizes ancient political thinking and allow it to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy regimes. Nor is there any evidence indicating that Americans share Tocqueville's concerns with self-interest well understood.

The lack of political morality in American political thought not only raises concerns about our ability to recognize tyranny when confronted with it, it raises concerns about the prospects for successful democratic government in our future.

However, Tocqueville offers a response to Strauss. Tocqueville's emphasis on mores begins to provide standards of political morality that inform his understanding of majority tyranny. Tocqueville argues for the protection of natural rights in *Democracy in America*, but he also focuses on the psychological effects majority tyranny can cause. His concern with majority tyranny allows for a sustentative and normative definition of tyranny.

Bibliography

- ABC. (2005, Dec. 5). Senator Says Bush Is Acting Like "King George". ABC Good Morning America.
- Aristotle. 1985. *Politics*. Ed. Carnes Lord. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Aristotle. 2002. *Ethics*. Joe Sachs. Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing.

Locke, John. 1988. *Two Treatises of Government*, Ed. Peter Laslett, Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press

Massachusetts Bill of Rights. (1780).

Siddiqui, Sabrina. (2012, June 20). Joe Walsh Calls Obama A “Tyrant” Over Immigration Policy Change. *Huffington Post*.

Strauss, Leo. 2000. *On Tyranny*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Strauss, Leo. 1953. *Natural Right and History*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Tocqueville, Alexis de. 2000. *Democracy In America*, Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop, eds. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Virginia Bill of Rights. (1776).

Footnotes

1 Aristotle focuses on teleology, which translates to wholeness or completeness. He argues that individuals gain completion by purposefully acting after deliberately choosing actions to take. In order

to achieve the highest form of good, the act must be complete. All things have a natural end or teleological purpose (see Aristotle’s *Ethics* footnote twelve at 1097a 20).

2 All references to Locke’s *Second Treatise* are to section number(s).

3 The state of war is characterized by force. Locke describes the state of war as happening when someone “. . . has exposed his life to the other’s power to be taken away by him, or any one that joins with him in his defense, and espouses his quarrel” (§16). When one tries to gain absolute power or threatens force over another man, they enter into a state of war.

4 The Massachusetts Bill of Rights and the Virginia Bill of Rights were two documents looked at.

5 According to Locke, tacit consent is “only as he dwells upon and enjoys that: the obligation any one is under, by virtue of such employment, to submit to the government, begins and ends with the enjoyment: so that whenever the owner, who has given nothing but such a tacit consent” (§ 120). If an individual is enjoying anything acquired in civil society, he is tacitly consenting to the acts of the government.