

Questions to Consider when reading Locke

1. Locke distinguishes "political power" from all other kinds of power. On what basis? What are the implications for the legitimate uses of power of this distinction? Are there alternative ways of conceptualizing politics that would not make so narrow a distinction between political and other forms of authority? How, in particular, would Locke's conception shape our understanding of "economic power"?
2. How does Locke conceive the difference between private and public spheres?
3. Locke's argument presupposes that human beings are equal and the same in all respects that are critical for forming a government. Is it possible to recognize real differences among human beings and still make a case for a liberal, limited state? How?
4. For Locke, property is a natural right and as such is prior to government, which is founded to protect men in the exercise of their rights. In much contemporary liberal thought, property and property rights are seen as deriving from the particular laws of particular societies. What difference do these accounts of the various origins of property make for the role of the state in the economy?
5. Consider the distinctions between negative and positive freedom in Berlin. Can the rights, frontiers and barriers behind which human beings should be inviolable on which his conception of negative freedom depends be reconciled with a view of society and economy as changing through history?

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17.100 / 15.678 / 14.781 Political Economy I
Fall 2010

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