

# Contents

Jean Jacques Rousseau .....	1
John Locke .....	4
Thomas Hobbes .....	6
Other readings: .....	7
<a href="https://sway.office.com/rrCEXmjEHUeYWkn3?ref=Link">https://sway.office.com/rrCEXmjEHUeYWkn3?ref=Link</a> .....	7

## Jean Jacques Rousseau

### [Jean-Jacques Rousseau](#)

#### Government –

Rousseau believed that good government must have the freedom of all its citizens as its most fundamental objective. Rousseau acknowledged that as long as property and laws exist, people can never be as entirely free in modern society as they are in the state of nature.

To Rousseau, laws should always record what the people collectively desire (the general will<sup>1</sup>) and should always be universally applicable to all members of the state. Further, they should exist to ensure that people's individual freedom is upheld, thereby guaranteeing that people remain loyal to the sovereign at all times.

Human inequality as we know it does not exist in the state of nature. In fact, the only kind of natural inequality, according to Rousseau, is the physical inequality that exists among

---

<sup>1</sup> In [political philosophy](#), the **general will** ([French](#): *volonté générale*) is the [will](#) of the people as a whole. The term was made famous by 18th-century Genevan philosopher [Jean-Jacques Rousseau](#).

men in the state of nature who may be able to provide for themselves according to their physical attributes.

## *Human nature –*

In his work, Rousseau addresses freedom more than any other problem of political philosophy and aims to explain how man in the state of nature is blessed with an enviable total freedom.

The most important characteristic of the state of nature is that people have complete physical freedom and are at liberty to do essentially as they wish. ...by and large he reveres it for the physical freedom it grants people, allowing them to be unencumbered by the coercive influence of the state and society.

In this regard, Rousseau's conception of the state of nature is entirely more positive than Hobbes's conception of the same idea, as Hobbes, who originated the term, viewed the state of nature as essentially a state of war and savagery. This difference in definition indicates the two philosophers' differing views of human nature, which Rousseau viewed as essentially good and Hobbes as essentially base and brutal. Rousseau believed that man was good, when in the state of nature, but is corrupted by society<sup>2</sup>.

## *Religion –*

Rousseau distinguishes three different kinds of religion. First, there is the "religion of man," which is a personal religion, linking the individual to God. Rousseau admires this kind of religion (and indeed professed to practice it) but suggests that by itself, it will hurt the state. A pure Christian is interested only in spiritual and other-worldly blessings and will happily endure hardships in this life for the sake of heavenly rewards. A healthy state needs citizens who will struggle and fight to make the state strong and safe.

Second, there is the "religion of the citizen," which is the official religion of the state, complete with dogmas and ceremonies. This religion combines the interests of church and state, teaching patriotism and a pious respect for the law. However, it also corrupts religion, by replacing true, sincere worship with official, dogmatic ceremony. It also breeds a violent intolerance of other nations.

Third, there is the kind of religion that Rousseau associates with the Catholic church, among others, which he condemns forcefully. In trying to set up two competing sets of laws--one civil and one religious--it creates all sorts of contradictions that prevent the proper exercise of any kind of law.

Rousseau recommends a compromise between the first two kinds of religion.

---

<sup>2</sup> Rousseau croyait que l'homme était bon, lorsqu'il était dans l'état de nature, mais qu'il était corrompu par la société.

## Basic Rights –

Rousseau believed in two basic rights that all humans deserve: freedom and equality. He argued that modern society disrupts the natural order by depriving humans of both of these rights.

He argues all the inequalities we recognize in modern society are characterized by the existence of different classes or the domination and exploitation of some people by others. Rousseau terms these kinds of inequalities *moral inequalities*, and he devotes much of his political philosophy to identifying the ways in which a just government can seek to overturn them. In general, Rousseau's meditations on inequality, as well as his radical assertion of the notion that all men are by-and-large equal in their natural state, were important inspirations for both the American and French Revolutions.

## Knowledge –

Rousseau was a big supporter of education. "We are born weak, we need strength; helpless we need aid; foolish we need reason. All that we lack at birth, all that we need when we come to man's estate, is the gift of education." His novel *Emile* emphasizes how allowing free expression and a focus on the environment instead of repressing curiosity will produce a well-balanced, freethinking child. He also believed that women needed to be educated as well as men, but in different directions. Women, according to Rousseau, were not meant to be brought up ignorant and only allowed to do housework.

## Needs–

Rousseau includes an analysis of human need as one element in his comparison of modern society and the state of nature. According to Rousseau, "needs" result from the passions, which make people desire an object or activity. In the state of nature, human needs are strictly limited to those things that ensure survival and reproduction. By contrast, as cooperation and division of labor develop in modern society, the needs of men multiply to include many nonessential things, such as friends, entertainment, and luxury goods. As time goes by and these sorts of needs increasingly become a part of everyday life, they become necessities. Although many of these needs are initially pleasurable and even good for human beings, men in modern society eventually become slaves to these superfluous needs, and the whole of society is bound together and shaped by their pursuit.

# John Locke

[John Locke - Wikipedia](#)

## Government –

Locke did not believe a democracy was the only valid system of government. He did not have a problem with a monarchy as long as its power was not absolute. Absolute power is completely at odds with a civil society because the people consented to be governed and it is illogical that they would choose a government that was worse than the state of nature.

The consent of the governed is one of the major themes of Locke's *Second Treatise*. No one can force men to form a government; they have to agree to create a social contract. The perfect freedom that they enjoyed in the state of nature must be set aside and the power to legislate and punish must be placed in an authority. The loss of the state of natural liberty is countered by the gain of many conveniences of a government.

When the ruler(s) of a commonwealth violates the law of nature and no longer seeks to preserve the public good, then the people have the right to rise up against him. A ruler should always be aware of the power of the people because they were the ones that formed the government and they have the power to dissolve it.

## Human nature –

For Locke, all knowledge comes exclusively through experience. He argues that at birth the mind is a tabula rasa, or blank slate, that humans fill with ideas as they experience the world through the five senses.

Humans are neither good nor evil, but rather are shaped by their experiences.

In the state of nature men mostly kept their promises and honored their obligations, and, though insecure, it was mostly peaceful, good, and pleasant. Though such places and times are insecure, violent conflicts are often ended by the forcible imposition of a just peace on evil doers, and peace is normal. Humans know what is right and wrong, and are capable of knowing what is lawful and unlawful well enough to resolve conflicts. In particular, and most importantly, they are capable of telling the difference between what is theirs and what belongs to someone else. Regrettably they do not always act in accordance with this knowledge.

## Religion –

We also have a demonstrative knowledge of God's existence, though our understanding cannot fully comprehend who or what he is.

Locke argues that God gave us our capacity for reason to aid us in the search for truth. As God's creations, we know that we must preserve ourselves. To help us, God created in us a natural aversion to misery and a desire for happiness, so we avoid things that cause us pain and seek out pleasure instead. We can reason that since we are all equally God's children, God must want everyone to be happy. If one person makes another unhappy by causing him pain, that person has rejected God's will.

Recognizing the responsibility to preserve the rights of all humankind naturally leads to tolerance, the notion that forms the basis for Locke's belief in the separation of church and state. If we all must come to discover the truth through reason, then no one man is naturally better able to discover truth than any other man. For this reason, political leaders do not have the right to impose beliefs on the people.

## Basic Rights –

In the state of nature, all men are equal to one another because they were created as such by God. They are to seek the preservation of mankind and refrain from interfering with other men's life, liberty, and possessions. Reason is what guides men in this state of nature, for if they comprehend that preserving other men will lead to their own preservation, then the state of nature is ideal. If any violation of this natural law occurs, all men are able to punish the offender because that man is disrupting this state of perfect freedom and is thus violating the rights of all men.

## Knowledge –

He challenged the traditional doctrine that learning consisted entirely of reading ancient texts and absorbing religious dogmas. He maintained that understanding the world required observation. He encouraged people to think for themselves. He urged that reason be the guide.

Thomas Hobbes had insisted that education should promote submission to authority, but Locke declared education is for liberty. Locke believed that setting a personal example is the most effective way to teach moral standards and fundamental skills, which is why he recommended homeschooling. He objected to government schools. He urged parents to nurture the unique genius of each child.

## Women's rights –

Locke gives important status to women. Locke establishes the status through the arguments that women are not property, women still retain power over children in the absence of the father, women are capable of leaving the compact of marriage and finally that women are to be honored and respected by children. Although Locke has feminist leanings, he falls short of feminist ideals by limiting each of these female rights.

# Thomas Hobbes

[Thomas Hobbes - Wikipedia](#)

## *Government –*

Hobbes promoted that monarchy is the best form of government and the only one that can guarantee peace. He unequivocally argues that absolutist monarchy is the only right form of government.

Humans give up their rights completely when a government is formed. In return, they no longer have to fear being killed.

If you shut up and do as you are told, you have the right not to be killed, and you do not even have the right not to be killed, for no matter what the Sovereign does, it does not constitute violation of the contract.

There is no right to rebel against a ruler. The ruler's will defines good and evil for his subjects. The King can do no wrong, because lawful and unlawful, good and evil, are merely commands, merely the will of the ruler.

## *Human nature –*

Human beings are physical objects, according to Hobbes, sophisticated machines all of whose functions and activities can be described and explained in purely mechanistic terms. Even thought itself, therefore, must be understood as an instance of the physical operation of the human body.

As Hobbes acknowledged, this account of human nature emphasizes our animal nature, leaving each of us to live independently of everyone else, acting only in his or her own self-interest, without regard for others. Humans, in essence, are naturally selfish because they only look out for their best interests. This produces what he called the "state of war," a way of life that is certain to prove "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." The only escape is by entering into contracts with each other—mutually beneficial agreements to surrender our individual interests in order to achieve the advantages of security that only a social existence can provide.

## *Religion –*

Hobbes believed that all phenomena in the universe, without exception, can be explained in terms of the motions and interactions of material bodies. He did not believe in the soul, or in the mind as separate from the body. Instead, he saw human beings as essentially

machines, with even their thoughts and emotions operating according to physical laws and chains of cause and effect, action and reaction.

### Basic Rights –

There are none. Everyone gave them up to the government in order to get protection.

### Knowledge –

Hobbes rejected what we now know as the scientific method because he believed that the observation of nature itself is too subjective a basis on which to ground philosophy and science.

### Morality–

Hobbes believed that in man's natural state, moral ideas do not exist. Thus, in speaking of human nature, he defines *good* simply as that which people desire and *evil* as that which they avoid, at least in the state of nature. Hobbes uses these definitions as bases for explaining a variety of emotions and behaviors. For example, *hope* is the prospect of attaining some apparent good, whereas *fear* is the recognition that some apparent good may not be attainable.

Other readings:

<https://sway.office.com/rrCEXmjEHUeYWkn3?ref=Link>