
The Enlightenment- Notable English Philosophers

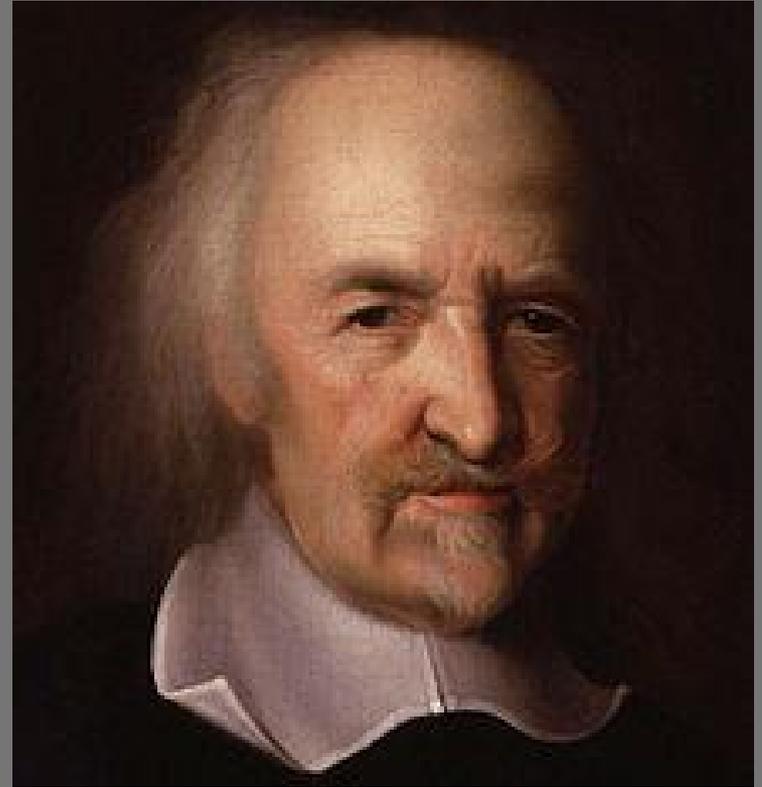
- John Locke
 - Thomas Hobbes
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Learning Objectives

Identify John Locke and his Philosophy

Identify Thomas Hobbes and his
Philosophy

Hobbes



Biography

“Thomas Hobbes was born in Westport, adjoining Malmesbury, England, on April 5, 1588. His father was the disgraced vicar of a local parish, and in the wake of the precipitating scandal (caused by brawling in front of his own church) he disappeared, abandoning his three children to the care of his brother.

Hobbes entered circles where the activities of the king, members of Parliament, and other wealthy landowners were discussed, and his intellectual abilities brought him close to power (although he never became a powerful figure himself). Through these channels, he began to observe the influence and structures of power and government.

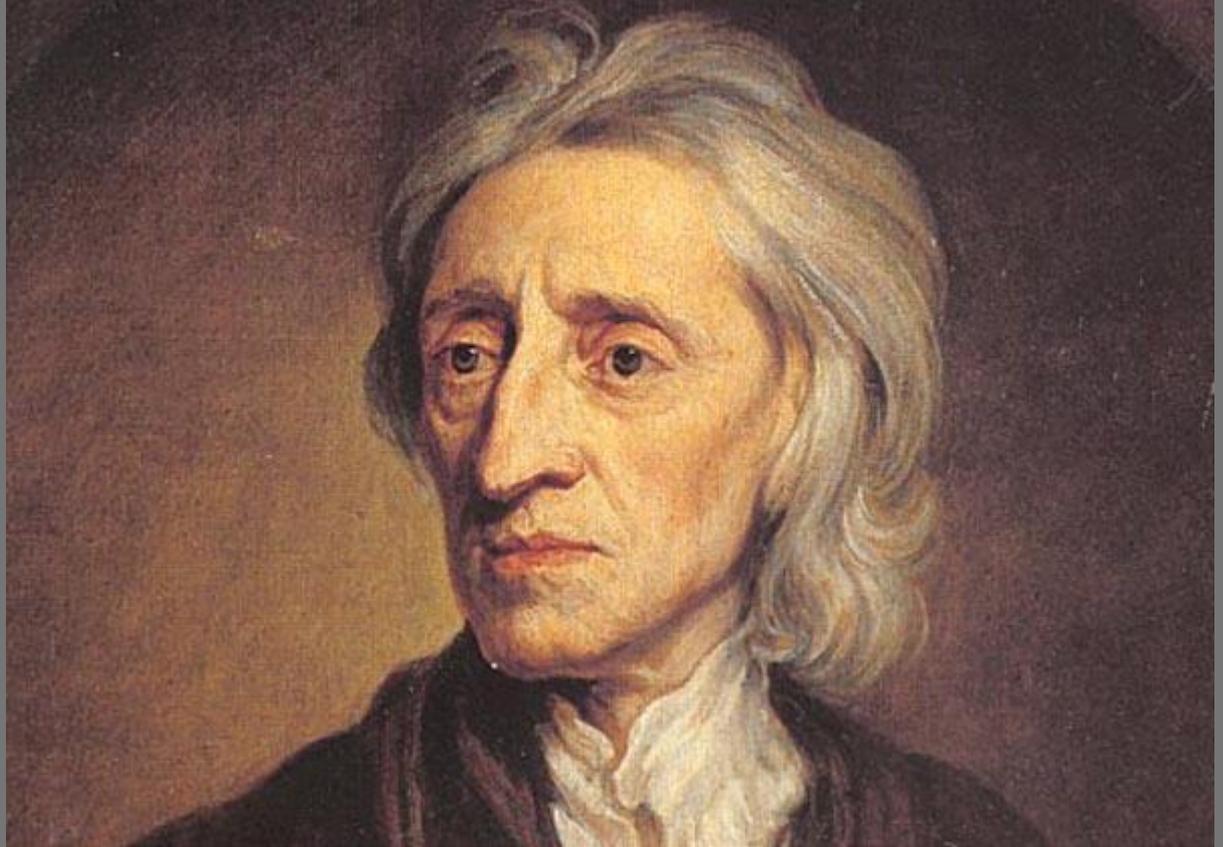
In the late 1630s, Hobbes became linked with the royalists in disputes between the king and Parliament, as the two factions were in conflict over the scope of kingly powers, especially regarding raising money for armies.

The conflict then culminated in the English Civil Wars (1642-1651), which led to the king being executed and a republic being declared, and Hobbes left the country to preserve his personal safety, living in France from 1640 to 1651.”

Philosophy

Throughout his life, Hobbes believed that the only true and correct form of government was the absolute monarchy. He argued this most forcefully in his landmark work, Leviathan. This belief stemmed from the central tenet of Hobbes' natural philosophy that human beings are, at their core, selfish creatures. According to Hobbes, if man is placed in a state of nature (that is, without any form of government) humans would be in a state of constant warfare with one another. In this natural state, Hobbes stated, the life of a man was 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.'

Locke



Biography

“Born in 1632, in Wrington, Somerset, England, Locke attended Oxford, where he graduated with a B.A. in 1656. He continued on with his master's, and in 1660, he began lecturing at Oxford on the classics.

Locke became a doctor as well as pursuing his academic career, studying and working alongside some of the greatest English minds of the 17th century, including Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton, who became one of Locke's closest friends. He was a founding member of the English Royal Society, which promoted scientific inquiries and the arts. In 1667, he took up residence with Lord Ashley and moved to London, becoming embroiled in the thick of English politics.

Throughout the next 20 years Locke spent time in London, Oxford, France, and Holland, often depending upon his allies' and his own political fortunes. Upon his return to England in 1689, Locke published his two most popular and influential works, Two Treatises of Government and the Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Locke went on to serve several years on the English Board of Trade before his death in 1704.”

Philosophy

“Locke defended the claim that men are by nature free and equal against claims that God had made all people naturally subject to a monarch. He argued that people have rights, such as the right to life, liberty, and property, that have a foundation independent of the laws of any particular society.

Locke used the claim that men are naturally free and equal as part of the justification for understanding legitimate political government as the result of a social contract where people in the state of nature conditionally transfer some of their rights to the government in order to better ensure the stable, comfortable enjoyment of their lives, liberty, and property.

Since governments exist by the consent of the people in order to protect the rights of the people and promote the public good, governments that fail to do so can be resisted and replaced with new governments.”

In Locke's philosophy, tabula rasa was the theory that at birth the (human) mind is a "blank slate" without rules for processing information, which are formed only by life experiences.

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Review

Who was John Locke? What was his philosophy?

Who was Thomas Hobbes? What was his Philosophy?