

## Section 2

PRIMARY SOURCE *from Two Treatises on Government*  
by John Locke

English philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) attacked absolute monarchy and promoted the concept of government by the people in his most famous work, *Two Treatises on Government*. Published in 1690, his book influenced the ideas of the philosophes Baron de Montesquieu and Jean-Jacques Rousseau as well as the framers of the United States Constitution. At the heart of Locke's argument was his belief that all people are born free and equal, with three natural rights: life, liberty, and property. As you read the following excerpt, think about how Locke defined one of these rights—liberty.

### Of Slavery

22. The *Natural Liberty* of Man is to be free from any Superior Power on Earth, and not to be under the Will or Legislative Authority of Man, but to have only the Law of Nature for his Rule. The Liberty of Man, in Society, is to be under no other Legislative Power, but that established by consent, in the Common-wealth, nor but what the Dominion of any Will, or Restraint of any Law, but what the Legislative shall enact, according to the Trust put in it. *Freedom* then is not what Sir R. F. tells us, O.A. 55 [224]. A *Liberty for every one to do what he lists, to live as he pleases, and not to be tyed by any Laws: But Freedom of Men under Government*, is, to have a standing Rule to live by, common to every one of that Society, and made by the Legislative Power erected in it; A Liberty to follow my own Will in all things, where the Rule prescribes not; and not to be subject to the inconstant, uncertain, unknown, Arbitrary Will of another Man. As *Freedom of Nature* is to be under no other restraint but the Law of Nature.
23. This *Freedom* from Absolute, Arbitrary Power, is so necessary to, and closely joyned with a Man's Preservation, that he cannot part with it, but by what forfeits his Preservation and Life together. For a Man, not having the Power of his own Life, *cannot*, by Compact, or his own Consent, *enslave himself* to any one, nor put himself under the Absolute, Arbitrary Power of another, to take away his Life, when he pleases. No body can give more Power than he has him-

self; and he that cannot take away his own Life, cannot give another power over it. Indeed having, by his fault, forfeited his own Life, by some Act that deserves Death; he, to whom he has forfeited it, may (when he has him in his Power) delay to take it, and make use of him to his own Service, and he does him no injury by it. For, whenever he finds the hardship of his Slavery out-weigh the value of his Life, 'tis in his Power, by resisting the Will of his Master, to draw on himself the Death he desires.

24. This is the perfect condition of Slavery, which is nothing else, but *the State of War continued, between a lawful Conquerour, and a Captive*. For, if once *Compact* enter between them, and make an agreement for a limited Power on the one side, and Obedience on the other, the State of War and *Slavery* ceases, as long as the Compact endures. For, as has been said, no Man can, by agreement, pass over to another that which he hath not in himself, a Power over his own Life.

### Activity Options

1. **Summarizing** Paraphrase Locke's definition of liberty in your own words. Then share your definition with classmates.
2. **Recognizing Point of View** In this excerpt, Locke refers to Sir Robert Filmer, an author who promoted the royal view of the basis of governmental power. With a partner, role-play a conversation between Locke and Sir Robert Filmer about freedom and the role of government.

CHAPTER  
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**PRIMARY SOURCE** *from The Social Contract*  
by Jean-Jacques Rousseau

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*In The Social Contract, published in 1762, the philosophe—a writer during the 18th century French Enlightenment—Jean-Jacques Rousseau outlined his ideas about individual freedom and obedience to authority. As you read this excerpt, think about Rousseau's argument against the use of force as a means of governing the people.*

**Chapter I—Subject of the First Book**

Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains. One thinks himself the master of others, and still remains a greater slave than they. How did this change come about? I do not know. What can make it legitimate? That question I think I can answer.

If I took into account only force, and the effects derived from it, I should say: "As long as a people is compelled to obey, and obeys, it does well; as soon as it can shake off the yoke, and shakes it off, it does still better; for, regaining its liberty by the same right as took it away, either it is justified in resuming it or there was no justification for those who took it away." But the social order is a sacred right which is the basis of all rights. Nevertheless, this right does not come from nature, and must therefore be founded on conventions. Before coming to that, I have to prove what I have just asserted.

**Chapter III—The Right of the Strongest**

The strongest is never strong enough to be always the master, unless he transforms strength into right, and obedience into duty. Hence the right of the strongest, which, though to all seeming meant ironically, is really laid down as a fundamental principle. But are we never to have an explanation of this phrase? Force is a physical power, and I fail to see what moral effect it can have. To yield to force is an act of necessity, not of will—at the most, an act of prudence. In what sense can it be a duty?

Suppose for a moment that this so-called "right" exists. I maintain that the sole result is a mass of inexplicable nonsense. For, if force creates right, the effect changes with the cause: every force that is greater than the first succeeds to its right. As soon as it is possible to disobey with impunity, dis-

obedience is legitimate; and, the strongest being always in the right, the only thing that matters is to act so as to become the strongest. But what kind of right is that which perishes when force fails? If we must obey perforce, there is no need to obey because we ought; and if we are not forced to obey, we are under no obligation to do so. Clearly, the word "right" adds nothing to force: in this connection, it means absolutely nothing.

Obey the powers that be. If this means yield to force, it is a good precept, but superfluous: I can answer for its never being violated. All power comes from God, I admit; but so does all sickness: does that mean that we are forbidden to call in the doctor? A brigand [bandit] surprises me at the edge of a wood: must I not merely surrender my purse on compulsion, but, even if I could withhold it, am I in conscience bound to give it up? For certainly the pistol he holds is also a power.

Let us then admit that force does not create right, and that we are obliged to obey only legitimate powers. In that case, my original question recurs.

*from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract and Discourses and Other Essays, trans. by G.D.H. Cole (E.P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1950). Reprinted in Peter Gay, ed., The Enlightenment: A Comprehensive Anthology (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 322–325.*

**Discussion Questions**

**Analyzing Issues**

1. Which did Rousseau believe was better—a government freely formed by the people or one imposed on a people by force?
2. Did Rousseau believe that it was the right of the strongest to rule?
3. **Making Inferences** How would you compare Locke's ideas about government with Rousseau's?

CHAPTER  
**6**  
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**PRIMARY SOURCE** *from A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*  
by Mary Wollstonecraft

*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, published by the English writer and reformer Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792, is one of the earliest feminist essays. According to this excerpt, how did Wollstonecraft feel about the education of women?*

I have sighed when obliged to confess that either nature has made a great difference between man and man or that the civilization which has hitherto taken place in the world has been very partial. I have turned over various books written on the subject of education, and patiently observed the conduct of parents and the management of schools; but what has been the result?—a profound conviction that the neglected education of my fellow creatures is the grand source of the misery I deplore; and that women, in particular, are rendered weak and wretched by a variety of concurring causes, originating from one hasty conclusion. The conduct and manners of women, in fact, evidently prove that their minds are not in a healthy state; for, like the flowers which are planted in too rich a soil, strength and usefulness are sacrificed to beauty; and the flaunting leaves, after having pleased a fastidious eye, fade, disregarded on the stalk, long before the season when they ought to have arrived at maturity. One cause of this barren blooming I attribute to a false system of education, gathered from the books written on this subject by men who, considering females rather as women than human creatures, have been more anxious to make them alluring mistresses than affectionate wives and rational mothers; . . . the civilized women of the present century, with a few exceptions, are only anxious to inspire love, when they ought to cherish a nobler ambition, and by their abilities and virtues exact respect. . . .

Yet, because I am a woman, I would not lead my readers to suppose that I mean violently to agitate the contested question respecting the equality or inferiority of the sex; but . . . I shall stop a moment to deliver, in a few words, my opinion. In the government of the physical world it is observable that the female in point of strength is, in general, inferior to the male. This is the law of nature; and it does not appear to be suspended or abrogated [abolished] in favor of woman. A degree of

physical superiority cannot, therefore, be denied—and it is a noble prerogative [right]! But not content with this natural preeminence, men endeavor to sink us still lower, merely to render us alluring objects for a moment; and women, . . . do not seek to obtain a durable interest in [men's] hearts, or to become the friends of the fellow creatures who find amusement in their society.

I am aware of an obvious inference: from every quarter have I heard exclamations against masculine women; but where are they to be found? If by this appellation [name] men mean to inveigh [protest] against their ardor in hunting, shooting, and gaming, I shall most cordially join in the cry; but if it be against the imitation of manly virtues, or, more properly speaking, the attainment of those talents and virtues, the exercise of which ennoble the human character, and which raise females in the scale of animal being, when they are comprehensively termed mankind; all those who view them with a philosophic eye must, I should think, wish with me that they may every day grow more and more masculine.

*from Barbara H. Solomon and Paula S. Berggren, eds., A Mary Wollstonecraft Reader (New York: New American Library, 1983), 267–269.*

### Discussion Questions

- Analyzing Causes and Recognizing Effects** According to Wollstonecraft, what happens when women are not properly educated?
- Clarifying** What is Wollstonecraft's opinion of the equality of men and women?
- Making Inferences** Jean-Jacques Rousseau believed that a woman's education should primarily teach her to become a better wife and mother. How do you think Wollstonecraft would have reacted to his views?