

# [Second treatise on government v the leviathan essay](https://assignbuster.com/second-treatise-on-government-v-the-leviathan-essay/)

[Government](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/government/)

One of the most apparent differences in the two authors’ (John Locke and Thomas Hobbes) point-of-views is their interpretations of what ungoverned societies, or humans in general, are like in their natural state. John Locke describes the natural state of people as “ a state of perfect freedom of acting and disposing of their own possessions and persons as they think fit within the bounds of the law of nature” and that all persons in this state are created equally, with no man having more power than another. In his belief, the only possible way any one man can ever have more power than the rest is if God unambiguously places him higher than them and endows him with the authority to rule.

Thomas Hobbes’s perspective is the opposite extreme of what John Locke stood for. He characterized the natural state of people as that of a state of, “ war of every man against every man. ” He also portrays all men as being equal, but equal in the sense that anyone can kill anyone else, and as a result of this, they live in constant fear and anxiety. He argues that man uses logic to deduce that the only reasonable way to protect one’s life is to gain enough power to control a state and to protect those who live under that particular state, gaining allies (which eliminates enemies in the process). The next big difference in their beliefs is what constitutes a permissible governing body, it’s extent of power, and how that power is divided (if it even is). Again, their convictions are at two opposite extremes from each other. Locke saw a truly constitutional government as a representative government.

In this particular form of rule, individuals are elected by the people, but rather than ruling by what that individual feels virtuous or morally just, they are charged with the responsibility of acting in the people’s interest. This is not, however, to be mistaken for a democracy; it was a system where a sanctioned contract could exist between citizens and monarchies or oligarchies. Hobbes, on the other hand, believed that the only government capable of protecting its people was that of one under the rule of an autocratic monarch (a state he describes as ‘ Leviathan’). He was convinced that any other type of government’s sovereign power could not properly defend itself from invaders. He maintained that a citizen’s duty to the monarch was total, and to act against it was simply detrimental because the government’s sole purpose of establishment was the protection, not oppression, of its people. Although the two do not blatantly agree upon any subject, they do allude to possibilities that exist in their opposing beliefs. For instance, Locke writes in the ninth chapter of the Second Treatise of Government (Of the Ends of Political Society and Government) that a man will not abandon the security of the state because the state of nature, “ however free, is full of fears and continual danger . .

. Likewise, Hobbes also appears to make such a compromise in chapter thirty two of The Leviathan (Of the Principles of Christian Politics) when stating that the foundation of his belief includes the, “. . .

natural word of God, as well as the prophetical,” and that, “. . . we are not to renounce our senses . .

. nor that which is the undoubted word of God. ” Bibliography Hobbes, Thomas. “ The Leviathan by Thomas Hobbes.

” Oregon State University. Web. 08 June 2009.

. Locke, John. “ Locke’s Second Treatise – Table of Contents. ” Oregon State University. Web.

08 June 2009.