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John Locke's Two Treatises of Government: New Interpretations

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The past thirty years have witnessed a renaissance in Lockean scholarship. New work and new thinking has now recast our most basic comprehension of John Locke (1623-1704) as a political theorist, and of Locke's Two Treatises of Government as a historical document. This collection of essays investigates the implications of the new scholarship for our understanding of Locke's political thought and its impact upon the liberal tradition.

John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* has long been recognized as one of the great works of political philosophy. Three centuries after it was written, students and scholars continue to study it for insights into the intellectual origins of the modern world and for a better understanding of such fundamental concepts as natural rights, social contract, limited government, and the rule of law.

The seven essays in this volume explore various dimensions of Locke's Two Treatises. The introductory essay places the new scholarship in a historical context. The next four essays show how this recent literature has affected our view of particular aspects of the *Two Treatises*: its theory of politics, its religious underpinnings, its theory of rationality, and its conception of the relationship between politics and economics. The final two essays discuss how the new scholarship has changed our understanding of the impact of the Two Treatises upon political thought in the eighteenth and late-twentieth centuries. Included at the end of the text is an extended secondary bibliography on John Locke's Two Treaties.

These essays do not seek closure. Nor do they set forth a single "correct" interpretation. Instead they offer readers a deeper appreciation of how our view of Locke's Two Treatises has changed over the last three decades and the importance of those changes in understanding of the liberal tradition.

"A solid contribution to the literature, bringing together some of the best new scholarship on Locke and reflecting the diversity, breadth, and depth of the current debate on both Locke and early liberalism. The editor's selection clearly demonstrates there is no single orthodox reading of Locke and conveys the intellectually lively debate that pervades the field today."—Ronald J. Terchek, author of *Locke, Smith, Mill and the Liberal Concept of Agency*.

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