

John in the mind as well as

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John Locke was an incredible and revolutionary man whose ideas about human nature and government were revolutionary and controversial in his time. As he once said, “ New opinions are always suspected, and usually opposed, without any other reason but because they are not already common.” Locke discusses in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* about how knowledge develops, the development of knowledge in the mind as well as his thoughts delineating the proper use of language. Locke’s beliefs concerning such ideas as the Natural Rights and the Consent of the Governed were not widely popular when he proposed them, but that has now changed. He found incentive in famous philosophers before him such as Aristotle and Newton, and many after him modeled their works on his ingenuity.

The philosophies of John Locke remain relevant today in everyday life around the world. John Locke, like most other philosophers, drew inspiration from the work of other famous philosophers which led to his own philosophies. Some of the most notable individuals who inspired Locke were Aristotle, Rene Descartes, and Sir Isaac Newton. Locke found inspiration in Aristotle’s “ blank slate” which he wrote about in *De Anima*. Locke used this idea in his *Essay* to convey the knowledge of a newborn as white paper.

Locke was a disciple of Rene Descartes and built upon his thoughts about knowledge. Sir Isaac Newton influenced Locke with his ideas on what makes up the world. Newton believed that particles held by gravity were what made up the Earth. From this, Locke developed the idea that knowledge is made up of simple and small ideas that, when held together, make larger and more complex ideas. (“ John Locke: Influences.”). John Locke himself also has had

an enormous influence on not only governments, but other philosophers as well. As Peter Gay once declared, “ John Locke was the founder of the Enlightenment in education as in much else.

” Locke inspired many other great men such as David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and Adam Smith. (John Locke: Legacy). He inspired many enlightenment philosophers as well.

The legacy of his work lives on in those who admire and draw from his ideas as well as those who teach them. John Locke’s concept that knowledge cannot extend past one’s experience is one of the most basic yet profoundly important ever proposed. It makes logical sense in that everything we know is experiential, either taught or observed.

The experiences one has during his or her lifetime are what shapes them as a person (Connolly). From concepts as basic as a favorite color or complex as political ideology are derived from events that have occurred from earlier experience. As Locke himself once said, “ Let us suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas; how comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from experience.” We come into the world knowing absolutely nothing, and then we learn through experiencing things such as hearing out parents speak which teaches us language or seeing other people walk which encourages us to attempt it ourselves.

The only power one is born with is the ability to think and observe and even that must be developed over time. Another philosophy of John Locke's that is very important to our modern world is the account of knowledge. This notion is explained in Book IV of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.

According to the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Locke spends the first part of Book IV clarifying and exploring this conception of knowledge.

The second part focuses on how we should apportion belief in cases where we lack knowledge." In this book, he discusses the correlation between things that give perspective as well as similarities and differences. An example of this would be one's perception of a dog and a cat. It is a well-known fact that a dog is not a cat which makes them different, but they are also both mammals therefore giving them a similarity. Locke also suggests that there are three degrees of knowledge. The first is intuitive, the second is demonstrative, and the third is sensitive. Intuitive knowledge is the ability to directly observe the relation between two concepts. An example of this would be identifying the between two pencils on a desk.

The pencils can be clearly perceived as writing objects of the same nature. Demonstrative knowledge is the concept that a connection between two ideas is sometimes imperceivable. Although the correlation between some ideas cannot be directly seen, the help of scientific and mathematical tools can prove the connection. For example, one cannot calculate the exact distance between two objects, but the distance can be calculated with a measuring device. Sensitive knowledge is the relationship between the idea of an object and the object itself.

The idea of a pineapple is what connects our minds with the actual object. One's definition of a pineapple is what gives the object its meaning (Connolly). The third philosophy that Locke proposed that is very relevant is the proper use of language.

This concept is in Book III of Locke's Essay. He proposed that language is a resource used to communicate with others. He sees language as a way to spread one's knowledge and ideas to new audiences (Connolly). In the book, Locke writes, " Words in their primary or immediate Signification, stand for nothing, but the Ideas in the Mind of him that uses them." An example of this would be the perception of paper money's value. From a physical standpoint, a twenty-dollar bill is a mixture of cotton and linen printed with specific designs and codes and not much else.

The idea of the twenty-dollar bill, however, is what gives the money its worth. That piece of printed linen and cotton can buy a meal or two, an article of clothing, and many other things. Locke also discusses the misuse and problems of language in this book. He says that because words are used to explain very complex and confusing ideas, only certain people will be able to understand the words. This can cause some people to lack the ability to comprehend the intent of the words spoken.

An example of this would be when highly educated individuals attempt to explain a vastly complicated idea, such as Dark Matter or String Theory, to an individual of lesser education. The latter of the two would undoubtedly be incredibly confused and would not understand what the former explained. The fourth ideal proposed by John Locke is the understanding of natural

rights. The natural rights of all people are life, liberty, and property and governments ought to protect these rights.

According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “ Perhaps the most central concept in Locke’s political philosophy is his theory of natural law and natural rights. The natural law concept existed long before Locke as a way of expressing the idea that there were certain moral truths that applied to all people, regardless of the particular place where they lived or the agreements they had made.” The natural right of life can be explained as the right of citizens to live a life. No one can deny a citizen the right to a life of their own, and no citizen can take the life of another. A person only has one life on this Earth and to take that away would be perhaps the worst thing one could do. The natural right of liberty is that no citizen can be denied freedom to do what they want with their lives, within reason. Freedom is what gives life its meaning and purpose, and without the freedom to fulfill our purpose in life then there is no life at all to be lived.

Any persons violating any laws forfeit their right to liberty upon conviction and detainment. The right to property is the right of a person to own anything. These can include any objects, land, or thoughts. A person’s property is what he passes down as his legacy. If one cannot leave behind a legacy, then what proof is there that he or she lived a life? A life unrecognized is almost like not living at all.

These rights were a radical belief at the time John Locke proposed them because of the popular belief in divine rights and christian law. The treatise in which he described the natural rights was so controversial at the time that

he didn't sign his name to it (Mosely). Many years later, Thomas Jefferson incorporated the natural rights into the foundation of the Declaration of Independence and the core laws of the United States. The only difference is that Jefferson changed 'property' to 'pursuit of happiness' to avoid confusion among citizens. The final philosophy John Locke proposed that is the belief of consent of the governed.

The consent of the governed is the view that the willingness of the people to be governed is what justifies a government. In successful governments, the people and the government have a healthy relationship because the people approve of the government. This theory is still relevant because historically when citizens are unhappy with the government, they tend to rebel and overthrow it. An example of this is the French Revolution in 1789 when a crowd of angry common French citizens stormed the Bastille on July 14th because they were angry with their current monarchy. Although their revolution did not accomplish what they wanted it to, it still left a mark on history.

A more recent situation in which the people are not in agreement with the government is the Communist state of China. The communist party seized power in 1949 against the wishes of the public, and since then there have been many demands for change. But the Chinese government silences anyone within their reach who speaks out with threats of imprisonment, denial of housing, and possible exile. ("The Consent of the Governed: Essential Principles.") John Locke was one of the most paramount modern philosophers ever to have lived because of his radical and new philosophies.

The legacy of his thoughts is visible in many aspects of life and will continue to be indefinitely. The influence past philosophers had on his work mirror the influence that he has had, and will continue to have, on others. he has had on His timeless reasoning about the extent and account of knowledge as well as the uses of language are uncomplicated yet significant.

His understanding of the natural rights and the consent of the governed were revolutionary in political philosophy. These ideas will continue to be influential in the future as they have been in the past.